

TOPICS IN HISTORICAL PHILOSOPHY

HEGEL AND THE ARTS

Edited by
STEPHEN HOULGATE

HEGEL AND THE ARTS

Topics in Historical Philosophy

General Editors David Kolb

John McCumber

Associate Editor Anthony J. Steinbock

HEGEL AND THE ARTS

Edited by Stephen Houlgate

Northwestern University Press
Evanston, Illinois

Northwestern University Press
www.nupress.northwestern.edu

Copyright © 2007 by Northwestern University Press. Published 2007. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN-13: 978-0-8101-2361-8 (cloth)
ISBN-10: 0-8101-2361-4 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-8101-2362-5 (paper)
ISBN-10: 0-8101-2362-2 (paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data are available from the Library of Congress.

Ⓢ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

In memory of Salim Kemal (1948–1999)

Contents

List of Abbreviations	ix
Introduction: An Overview of Hegel's Aesthetics	xi
Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art	3
Terry Pinkard	
Hegel's Architecture	29
David Kolb	
Hegel on the Beauty of Sculpture	56
Stephen Houlgate	
Carnation and the Eccentricity of Painting	90
John Sallis	
Hegel on Music	119
Richard Eldridge	
Hegel's Theory of Tragedy	146
Stephen Houlgate	
Art and History: Hegel on the End, the Beginning, and the Future of Art	179
Martin Donougho	
Freedom from Nature? Post-Hegelian Reflections on the End(s) of Art	216
J. M. Bernstein	
What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)	244
Robert B. Pippin	
Art, Religion, and the Modernity of Hegel	271
John Walker	
The "Religion of Art"	296
Rüdiger Bubner	

Hegel and German Romanticism	310
Judith Norman	
Index	337
Contributors	351

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the essays in this collection.

- A* G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).
- Ak* G. W. F. Hegel, *Ästhetik*, ed. Friedrich Bassenge (West Berlin: Verlag das europäische Buch, 1985).
- AT* T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
- ILA* G. W. F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993).
- KA* Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1958–).
- LPR* G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. P. C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–87).
- P* Yves-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).
- PG* G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).
- PK* G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1826), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert, J. I. Kwon and K. Berr (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).
- PKA* G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik* (1826), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert and B. Collenberg-Plotnikov (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004).
- PR* G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition: The Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- PRS* G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1969).
- PS* G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

- VA G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).
- VAB G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik. Berlin 1820/21*, ed. H. Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995).
- VPK G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2003).
- VPR G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke, 3 parts in 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983–85).
- W Arthur C. Danto, *The Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste* (Amsterdam: G&B Arts International, 1998).
- Werke G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–70).

Introduction: An Overview of Hegel's Aesthetics

Stephen Houlgate

In the draft introduction to his *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno credits both Kant and Hegel with producing “the most powerful aesthetics.”¹ Few would deny that Kant is an aesthetic theorist of enormous importance. Hegel’s contribution to aesthetics, however, is less widely acknowledged and appreciated. Some will be familiar with Hegel’s theory of tragedy and his (supposed) doctrine of the “end of art,” but many philosophers and writers on art pay little or no attention to his lectures on aesthetics. The aim of this collection of essays—all but one of which have been written specially for this volume—is to raise the profile of Hegel’s aesthetic theory by showing in detail precisely why that theory is, in Adorno’s word, so “powerful.” The contributors to this volume do not endorse every aspect of Hegel’s position. Together, however, they demonstrate that Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics constitute one of the richest reservoirs of ideas about the arts, their history, and their future that we possess.²

Hegel’s reflections on art form part of that extraordinary tradition of German aesthetic thought that stretches from Baumgarten’s *Aesthetica*, published in the 1750s, through Winckelmann, Lessing, Kant, Schiller, Hölderlin, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and on—after Hegel’s death in 1831—to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Adorno. Hegel read widely in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century segment of this tradition (ignoring only Schopenhauer), and he was particularly influenced by Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790) and Schiller’s letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, which he read on their publication in 1795.

Hegel’s own earliest extended discussion of an aesthetic topic is to be found in an essay on “a few characteristic differences” between ancient and modern poets, penned in 1788 when he was not quite eighteen.³ In 1796, in the wake of reading Schiller’s letters on aesthetic education, he proceeded to give pride of place to aesthetic sensibility in an exuberant text entitled “Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism.” In this text Hegel—assuming that he is indeed the author, rather than Schelling or Hölderlin—argues boldly that “the highest act of reason . . . is an aesthetic act” and that consequently “the philosopher must possess just as

much aesthetic power as the poet.”⁴ Hegel’s groundbreaking *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) does not give quite such prominence to aesthetic sensibility or power, but it does contain a remarkable account of what he calls the “religion of art” (*Kunst-Religion*) that was embraced in particular by the Greeks.⁵ The differences between art, religion, and philosophy are discussed in the three editions of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817, 1827, and 1830).⁶ The most extensive analysis of art and aesthetic self-consciousness is provided, however, in the lectures that Hegel gave on aesthetics first at Heidelberg (in 1817 and 1818) and then in Berlin (in 1820–21, 1823, 1826, and 1828–29).⁷ After Hegel’s death these lectures were edited by his student, H. G. Hotho, into the text known today as *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* and translated into English as *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*.⁸ Recently, separate transcripts of Hegel’s lectures from 1820–21, 1823, and 1826 have also been published, allowing us to see for the first time how his thoughts on art and aesthetics developed during his years in Berlin.⁹

Hegel’s lectures (and the *Encyclopaedia*) locate aesthetics within a comprehensive philosophical system that also includes logic, the philosophy of nature, the philosophies of right and history, and the philosophy of religion. In the eyes of some commentators, this inevitably leads Hegel to distort the character of art and aesthetic experience because he has to force them into the straitjacket of his a priori systematic conception of being and of human history. “In the end,” writes Beat Wyss, “the facts are all ordered according to the immanent necessities of logic,” so that “one always sees only what one wants to see.”¹⁰ Similarly, Adorno—who, as we have seen, otherwise thought highly of Hegel’s aesthetics—intimates that Hegel was guilty of “the unwavering asceticism of conceptualization, doggedly refusing to allow itself to be irritated by facts.” Indeed, Adorno maintains that both “Hegel and Kant . . . were able to write major aesthetics without understanding anything about art” (that is, anything about individual works of art).¹¹ Whether Kant understood much about art, I leave for others to judge. It is true that the *Critique of Judgment* contains very few references to concrete works of art; but then, as Kai Hammermeister notes, for Kant “most aesthetic judgments are not about art, but nature.”¹² Adorno’s criticism of Hegel is, however, clearly unjust. Hegel in fact had an extensive and intimate knowledge of many of the greatest works of art in the Western tradition.

Hegel knew the work of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Schiller especially well and had very likely read Shakespeare’s *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet* in English.¹³ He visited the opera in Berlin regularly and particularly loved Mozart’s *Magic Flute* and the operas of Gluck. In Vienna in 1824 he saw Rossini’s *Barber of Seville*,

and he attended both performances of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in Berlin in March 1829 as an honored guest (together with Schleiermacher and Heine) of Felix Mendelssohn, who had revived the work.¹⁴ He never visited Greece or Italy but he traveled to Munich, Dresden, Cologne, and the Low Countries, as well as to Vienna and Paris, and was able to see at first hand many of the greatest paintings in the world, including Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* and Correggio's *Holy Night* (in Dresden), Stephan Lochner's *Dombild* (in Cologne), the central panel of the van Eyck altarpiece (in Ghent), Rembrandt's *Night Watch* (in Amsterdam), and "famous items by the noblest masters one has seen a hundred times in copper engravings: Raphael, Correggio, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian" (in Paris).¹⁵ One may sometimes wish to take issue with Hegel's interpretation of individual works, but in most cases his judgments are clearly based not on the "unwavering asceticism of conceptualization" but on detailed familiarity with the works concerned.

It is true, however, that Hegel's insights into individual works are woven into a systematic account of the nature of art and of beauty. This account is undoubtedly *a priori*. Yet it does not, in my view, systematically distort Hegel's view of art or of artworks. On the contrary, it is an account of exemplary subtlety and intelligence that sheds remarkable light on the phenomenon of art and allows Hegel to develop sophisticated and illuminating interpretations of some of the most significant artworks in history (including, perhaps most famously, Sophocles' *Antigone*).

Art and Beauty

Hegel's philosophical analysis of art and beauty is itself embedded in an ontological account of the nature of *being*. Hegel understands being to be the process of becoming conscious of itself and thereby becoming "spirit" or *Geist*. Being achieves such self-consciousness in human beings. Human beings are thus not just an accident of evolution: their existence is made necessary by the very nature of being itself—by being's inherent drive toward self-consciousness. Note that, for Hegel, there is no cosmic consciousness or "world spirit" apart from or outside of human existence. It is in human beings alone (and in other finite, self-conscious beings that may exist on other planets) that being attains consciousness of itself. *We* are being-that-has-become-spiritual.

History, according to Hegel, is simply the process whereby humanity extends, deepens, and refines its consciousness of being and of itself and in the process remodels its social and political world:

All revolutions, in the sciences no less than in world history, originate solely from the fact that Spirit, in order to understand and comprehend itself with a view to possessing itself, has changed its categories, comprehending itself more truly, more deeply, more intimately, and more in unity with itself.¹⁶

This process of historical development is structured by the dialectical rationality inherent in being itself—which Hegel calls the “Idea”—and so is not under the control of human beings. At the same time that rationality is actually set in motion by, and works through, human actions: it is not a wholly separate and independent power overseeing and directing the course of history. For Hegel, therefore, history is the sphere in which *human beings* live and act in certain ways, but through their individual and communal actions unintentionally deepen humanity’s understanding of itself in a progressive, rational, dialectical manner.

As humanity’s understanding of itself progresses in history, we come to appreciate more fully not only the character of the “Idea” which works through our actions but also the fact that our vocation as human beings is ultimately to be *free*. Furthermore, we learn what is required for us to be fully free, self-conscious beings, and in so doing develop a substantial interest in certain forms of political, social, economic, familial, and personal life that are essential to freedom. In the modern period, for example, we realize that freedom makes necessary life in a political state in which there is not only the right to own and exchange property and to exercise freedom of conscience and choice of occupation, but also a shared trust that public institutions actually secure these rights.

It is important to note that, for Hegel, the purpose of human life is both to be free in our various social, political, and familial practices and to deepen our *consciousness* and *understanding* of ourselves and the world we inhabit. This understanding is articulated in natural science and in our everyday conceptions. It finds its fullest expression, however, in the three forms of what Hegel calls “absolute spirit.” The form of absolute spirit that presents our understanding of the truth in the clearest and most adequate manner is philosophy (by which Hegel means speculative, dialectical philosophy as he conceives it). Philosophy presents the truth in dialectical concepts; religion, by contrast, is the form of absolute spirit in which we understand the truth through feeling, faith, and imaginative representations. Religion thus pictures as “God” what philosophy conceives as the rational Idea inherent in being itself. The most adequate religious understanding of the truth, Hegel argues, is to be found in Christianity, because in the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit

Christianity explicitly recognizes that God's work in history is inseparable from the actions of humanity.

It is sometimes thought that Hegel's evident privileging of philosophy over religion renders religion itself redundant. After all, if philosophy gives us the truth in its clearest articulation, what need have we of the less lucid images and stories of religion? Hegel, however, thought that human beings could not live by concepts alone: as well as understanding the truth through concepts, they also have to understand it through feeling, imagination, and faith. Accordingly, Hegel felt no embarrassment in acknowledging himself to be a Lutheran.¹⁷ Moreover, he maintained that for most people philosophy actually plays little if any role in their lives and religious faith is the primary locus of their understanding of the truth: "It is in terms of religion that a people [*Volk*] defines what it considers to be true." Religion is thus of supreme importance, in Hegel's view, and its disappearance from the life of the state would be highly damaging.¹⁸

According to Hegel, however, we must not only understand the truth in concepts and in faith; we must also see (or hear) it given *sensuous* expression in stone, wood, colored surfaces, sounds, or words. This is because we are multilayered, concrete beings who need to relate to the truth through our eyes and ears as much as through feeling and understanding (VA 1:135/A 1:97–98). The sensuous expression of the "divine" Idea at work in the world and of human freedom is *beauty*. Beauty, for Hegel, is thus not just that which appeals to our taste or is formally harmonious. It is "the sensuous *appearance* [*Scheinen*] of the Idea" (VA 1:151/A 1:111) or, as Schiller puts it, "freedom in appearance."¹⁹ Beauty, in other words, is "a specific way of expressing and representing the true" (VA 1:127/A 1:91).

If beauty is truly to be the expression of human freedom, however, it must itself be freely created by human beings rather than simply found in nature. The objects that are specifically created by human beings in order to bring beauty before their minds are works of *art*. Art, for Hegel, is thus the third form of absolute spirit in which we become conscious of the true character of God and humanity.

Hegel's lectures on aesthetics explore the nature of art, the different forms of aesthetic expression, and the distinctive character of the individual arts. It should be noted, however, that Hegel does not take as his starting point the various practices of fashioning stone and wood into significant shapes, applying colors to a surface, or arranging words into poems. He does not start with the simple activity of *making works of art* and then try to work out from this what the possibilities of each art are. Hegel begins from the idea of *beauty* (VA 1:39/A 1:21–22). He argues that human beings need beauty because, as free, self-conscious, but also *sensuous* be-

ings, they need to see and hear truth and freedom given concrete sensuous expression; and he contends that they need art because they need to encounter beauty that has itself been freely created by human beings. This is not to say that art necessarily originated in some primordial desire for beauty pulsating within primitive mankind. It is to insist, however, that whatever its origin may have been and whatever other uses it may be put to, art's true purpose is to grant us the occasion to contemplate, dwell with, and mold our minds to the contours of beauty. (Note, by the way, that although beautiful art addresses the senses, specifically the eyes and the ears, it does not address the senses *alone*. It speaks to the mind through the senses by showing the mind its own freedom in a sensuous form [VA 1:57/A 1:35].)

In an age when many artists regard beauty as peripheral and prefer to concern themselves with aesthetic innovation, the unfettered exploration of their chosen medium, or simply breaking taboos, Hegel's beauty-centered aesthetics might well seem hopelessly old-fashioned.²⁰ It is important to recognize, however, that Hegel gives pride of place to beauty not out of any personal conservatism, but because he regards beauty as essential to a life lived in the full and multidimensional consciousness of human freedom. Art and beauty are not luxuries for Hegel, but necessities. Hegel does not deny that art can do many other things apart from present us with beauty. He recognizes that art can be decorative and entertaining, that it can promote aims that are principally moral and political rather than aesthetic, and that it can serve to refine our wilder emotions (VA 1:20, 72–76/A 1:7, 47–50). It can also explore the possibilities of the artistic medium itself or simply display the skill of the artist (VA 2:227–28/A 1:599). If, however, besides doing these things art fails to present us with beauty, it deprives us not just of some superfluous adornment to our lives but of an indispensable way of bringing our own freedom and vitality into view.

In the first half of his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant is primarily concerned with the character of aesthetic judgment. He argues that we judge an object to be beautiful when it stimulates the free play of our understanding and imagination. This free play leads to no definite cognition of the object but is the source of a feeling of pleasure in the subject. “Without relation to the feeling of the subject,” Kant writes, “beauty is nothing by itself.”²¹ Beauty is not, therefore, an independent property of the object. Hegel, by contrast, thinks that beauty is a property of objects—in particular, of works of art—and he is interested in the *objective* character of such beauty (VA 1:67/A 1:44).

It has been said that Hegel's aesthetic theory marks a “turn from a formal aesthetics to one of content.”²² This is true insofar as Hegel claims

that beauty requires the content of art to be the “divine” (whether envisaged in the form of the Greek gods or of Christ), to be human freedom, liveliness, and spirit, or to be aspects of nature, such as landscapes and animals, in which we see something of our own freedom and vitality reflected. Beauty, however, is not just a matter of content: it is the appropriate content expressed in the appropriate sensuous *form*. Hegel is thus every bit as engaged as the aesthetic formalist by the formal features of an artwork, especially in the more obviously “formal” arts of architecture and music but also in sculpture, painting, and poetry. (Hence his interest in the shape of the most beautiful profile in sculpture or in the beauty created by the play of colors in painting.)²³

The important thing, for Hegel, is that beauty is not just in the eye (or taste or judgment) of the beholder, but in the *object* itself—in its own content and form. This means that our taste need not always coincide with objective beauty. Many beautiful works of art may speak to us directly. We may need to learn to appreciate others, however, by discovering more about the historical context in which they were produced (VA 1:30/A 1:14). In the case of the sculptures of fifth-century Greece—works that for Hegel are objectively the most beautiful and “ideal”—some in modernity may find it impossible to take unalloyed delight in their beauty because they lack the inner depth of character and emotion that we have come to expect of a work of art.²⁴ Of course, if taste and beauty can diverge in this way, it is possible that human beings could lose the taste for beauty altogether (as they could lose interest in religion). But to do so, if we are to believe Hegel, would be like losing our taste for the very food that sustains and nourishes us. It would not constitute any “liberation” or “emancipation” of art or of human beings.

Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art

Hegel notes that not every conception of the divine and the human is capable of giving rise to beauty. This is because only certain conceptions of the divine and the human can be given clear *sensuous* expression in art. To be capable of such expression, Hegel argues, divine reason and human freedom must themselves be conceived as taking the shape of concrete, *embodied* individuality (VA 1:104/A 1:73). If the divine is conceived too abstractly as “simply *one*, the supreme being as such” (as Hegel thinks occurs in Judaism and Islam [VA 1:101/A 1:70]), art will not be able to present it in the form of visible individuals and thereby bring it directly before our eyes and minds. Art will thus be “sublime” (*erhaben*) rather than beautiful,

since it will point *beyond* itself to a God who remains invisible: "The inner does not appear in it but so transcends it that nothing comes into the representation except as this transcendence and transcending" (VA 1:479/A 1:372).

Hegel includes sublime art under the general category of "symbolic" art. The quintessential symbolic art, he tells us, was created by the ancient Egyptians. Unlike the Jews, the Egyptians conceived of the divine as differentiated into individual gods. Yet these gods were shadowy figures associated with death and mystery and so remained elusive. Consequently, for the Egyptians, "the individual shape, as this individual animal, or this human personification, or event, or action, cannot bring before contemplation an immediate adequate existence of the Absolute" (VA 1:451/A 1:349). The visible images of the gods in Egyptian art thus do no more than *symbolize* gods who can never come fully into view. Since such symbolic art is not the clear sensuous *manifestation* of the divine, it lacks genuine beauty just as sublime art does.

Hegel's aesthetic theory will no doubt be regarded by many as narrowly "Eurocentric," since it clearly gives pride of place to the art and poetry of Greece, Italy, England, the Netherlands, and Germany. In fact, however, Hegel was one of the first to acknowledge and appreciate the art of non-European cultures, such as India and Egypt. He draws special attention to the fact that the "abandonment and distortion of natural formations" found in such art stems not from "unintentional lack of technical skill or practice, but intentional alteration which proceeds from and is demanded by what is in the artist's mind" (VA 1:106/A 1:74). Nevertheless, Hegel argues that symbolic art clearly falls short of objective beauty. This, in his view, is because the underlying conception of the divine is still too indeterminate or abstract: the divine is not understood to be *fully incarnated* in the concrete gestures, expressions, and actions of individuals. "The Chinese, Indians, and Egyptians," he argues, "in their artistic shapes, images of gods, and idols, never get beyond formlessness or a bad and untrue definiteness of form." He continues: "They could not master true beauty because their mythological ideas, the content and thought of their works of art, were still indeterminate, or determined badly, and so did not consist of the content which is absolute in itself" (VA 1:105/A 1:74). Hegel's *aesthetic* objection to symbolic art is thus based on a more fundamental *religious* objection.

Hegel goes on to note that "works of art are all the more excellent in expressing true beauty, the deeper is the inner truth of their content and thought." That deeper truth, he claims, is first to be found in the religion and art of the ancient Greeks. The Greek gods, for Hegel, are neither abstract nor mysterious and elusive, but are concrete, self-

determining individuals whose multifaceted freedom and vitality are fully embodied in gesture and action. These gods can thus be brought fully into view in art, above all in sculpture. Human freedom is also conceived by the Greeks as the freedom of embodied action and finds direct expression in both sculpture and poetry (epic as well as dramatic). Unlike symbolic art, therefore, Greek art at its best is able to render divine and human freedom fully visible to the eye and the mind. And since it is the unclouded sensuous manifestation of freedom, such art is objectively *beautiful*. Indeed, Greek art, in Hegel's view, is "the consummation of the realm of beauty": "nothing can be or become more beautiful" (VA 2:127–28/A 1:517).

The beauty of Greek or "classical" art does not lie purely in the fact that it is pleasing to the eye or ear. It resides in the fact that the sensuous material—the stone or poetic language—is thoroughly imbued with, and animated by, divine or human *freedom*. Greek beauty, in other words, consists in the perfect fusion of the sensuous and the spiritual. Hegel notes that, whether the freedom expressed is that of the gods or of human beings, in art it must be given the form of the free *human* body and of free *human* action. This is because it is only in the posture and action of human beings that free "spirit" becomes visible: "Insofar as art's task is to bring the spiritual before our eyes in a sensuous manner, it must proceed to this anthropomorphism [*Vermenschlichung*], since spirit appears sensuously in a satisfying way only in its body" (VA 1:110/A 1:78). Note that the task of beautiful art in Greece is not simply to *imitate* or accurately *represent* the human body (or any other aspect of nature) in all its mundane detail. Such art presents images of human beings because its task is to render concrete freedom visible. Since this, and not simple naturalism, is the aim of Greek art, it idealizes the body. Greek art, in Hegel's view, is thus paradoxical: for it shows us our own *true* freedom in the *idealized* images and shapes of art. It is clear that such art cannot be appreciated by the literal-minded.

Greek art achieves the purest beauty, or the "Ideal," because the Greek conception of divinity and human freedom as embodied in concrete, living individuals is perfectly suited to aesthetic expression. Indeed, Hegel claims that Greek religion needs art like no other religion. This is because it was Greek artists and poets, such as Homer, who actually "gave the nation a definite idea of the activity, life, and work of the Divine, or, in other words, the definite content of religion." It was in *art* that the inchoate *religious* ideas fermenting within the Greeks were rendered properly determinate. Poets and artists were thus for the Greeks the effective "creators of their gods" (VA 1:141/A 1:102).

Beauty, for Hegel, is an aesthetic phenomenon, not a moral or religious one. Nonetheless, the most beautiful art, in his view, was produced

when art was the servant of religion and mythology. Such art was not merely decorative or entertaining but gave expression to “the *Divine*, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit” (VA 1:21/A 1:7). In so doing it fulfilled what Hegel regarded as the highest vocation of which art is capable: for art cannot be any more important in our lives than when it brings directly before our minds the religious (and associated ethical) principles and values that we hold most dear.

In contrast to Greek polytheism, Christianity conceives of the divine as pure “spirit,” as the single, invisible God whose Holy Spirit inwardly animates and transforms believers and through such believers is at work in history. This God, according to Hegel, does not need to be given aesthetic expression in order to become determinate and intelligible for us, but can be fully comprehended within religious feeling and faith (VA 1:112–13/A 1:80). Christianity is thus independent of art in a way that Greek religion is not. Yet Christianity also holds that God’s love is incarnated and made visible to believers in the life and death of Christ (and of the Virgin Mary and the other saints). Christian love and spirituality thus remain capable of being given sensuous, visible expression in *art*.

In Greek art—in particular, sculpture—spiritual freedom is wholly immersed in and identical with visible *bodily* shape. In Christian or “romantic” art, by contrast, what must be presented in the sensuous medium of stone, color, or language is a spirituality that has withdrawn from the externality of the body into the profound *inwardness* of love. Romantic beauty will thus take the form not just of idealized bodily shape as such but of harmonious human form that is clearly suffused with inner feeling and love. Such beauty is not *pure* beauty, but the “beauty of inwardness [*Schönheit der Innigkeit*]” (VA 2:144/A 1:531). It is found supremely in the painted images of the Virgin and Child and of Christ and his disciples created by artists such as Jan van Eyck, Raphael, and Correggio. In the “golden age of the later Middle Ages” (VA 1:24/A 1:10) and in the Renaissance, art thus continues to give expression to the divine and to “the most comprehensive truths of the spirit,” and so continues to fulfill its highest vocation.

With the Reformation the relation between art and religion alters and the possibilities for art itself change. The defining characteristic of the Reformation for Hegel is that divine love is understood to be *fully* present only within *faith*. The implications for art are clear: for if God is fully present only within the inwardness of faith, he cannot be regarded as fully present in the human artifacts we see before us. As Hegel puts it, “to the Lutherans truth is not a made object.”²⁵ Through the Reformation, “religious ideas were [thus] drawn away from their wrapping in the element of sense and brought back to the inwardness of heart and thinking” (VA 1:142/A 1:103). This does not mean that Protestantism abandons all

interest in visualizing the incarnate God: there is great Protestant religious art, for example by Rembrandt. But it does mean that art ceases to play the prominent role in religious life that it played in the Middle Ages and makes way more and more for the inner witness of faith itself. It also means that to the extent that Protestant religious spirituality continues to find aesthetic expression, it is less in the painted images of Christ and the Virgin Mary and more in music, hymns, and lyric poems.²⁶

As Protestant religious sensibility withdraws into the inwardness of faith, therefore, it frees art from subservience to religion. In so doing it allows art to become fully *secular*. There was, of course, secular art, especially portrait painting, before the Reformation. But for Hegel, the Reformation gave a new and powerful impetus to secular art by acknowledging the distinctive value of the worldly and the everyday. "To Protestantism alone," Hegel claims, "does it fall to get a sure footing in the prose of life, to make it absolutely valid in itself independently of religious associations, and to let it develop in unrestricted freedom" (VA 2:225–26/A 1:598). Protestantism thus frees a people such as the Dutch to explore in their paintings everyday scenes and objects which might otherwise have been deemed unworthy of artistic portrayal. The most beautiful art had previously been religious art. In seventeenth-century Dutch painting, however, we discover the subtle beauty of the everyday: for what we see given sensuous expression in their delightful pictures of bourgeois domestic life and of peasant merrymaking is the profound cheerfulness, vitality, and *freedom* of ordinary people. Such robust, down-to-earth freedom is, of course, combined with grander, more heroic energy and freedom in the plays of Shakespeare.

With Protestantism, in Hegel's view, art gains its autonomy from religion. Its distinctive vocation thus ceases to be that of rendering the divine visible. Art is no longer the space in which "the *Divine*, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit" find their adequate expression; those interests and truths are now fully articulated in religion (and philosophy) alone. In being emancipated, therefore, art loses its ability to fulfill its own *highest* calling. As Hegel puts it, "Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past" because it "no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations sought in it" (VA 1:24–25/A 1:10–11). This means, for Hegel, that modern, post-Reformation art fails to provide us with the same *religious* satisfaction that earlier ages were afforded by their art. Nevertheless, such art is still able to carry out a task that comes close to its highest vocation, because it is still able to create *secular* beauty by giving sensuous expression to concrete human freedom and life.

Hegel also contends that we (modern Protestants) no longer derive—or at least should no longer derive—the same religious satisfaction

from Greek and medieval art as did their original audiences: “No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed, it is no help: we bow the knee no longer [before these artistic portrayals]” (VA 1:142/A 1:103). This does not prevent us from appreciating the *beauty* of those older works of art: we can still see in them the magnificent and moving sensuous expression of human freedom or of Christian love. We (modern Protestants) do not, however, look upon those works with true religious veneration and worship the divine in them, because we know that they are “only” works of art and that divine freedom and love are truly present in faith alone.

The So-Called End of Art

Hegel is sometimes said to have claimed that art comes to an end or “dies” in the modern world.²⁷ In fact, however, he never makes any such claim. He declares that the modern world witnesses the end or “dissolution” of the romantic form of art, and he notes that the epic has died out to be replaced by the novel and the short story.²⁸ He also proclaims, as we have just seen, that art for us is no longer able to fulfill its highest—that is, aesthetico-religious—vocation. Nowhere, however, does he say that art *as such* comes to an end. On the contrary, he insists that art remains a fundamental (though not the supreme) need in the modern world and will always continue to do so. Indeed, he expresses the “hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection” (VA 1:142/A 1:103). For Hegel, then, art clearly had a future. This future—which in Hegel’s own time was already becoming a reality—would be one in which artists are no longer restricted to a particular style or content but can draw freely on all styles, from the classical, romantic, or even symbolic art forms, to present what engages their interest:

Bondage to a particular subject-matter and a mode of portrayal suitable for this material alone are for artists today something past, and art therefore has become a free instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to any material of whatever kind. (VA 2:235/A 1:605)

The modern age, viewed through Hegel’s eyes, is thus one in which artists can create works in a Neoclassical, a neo-Gothic (or “Pre-Raphaelite”), or even—within limits—an “Orientalizing” style: Hegel

remarks that Persian and Arab poetry afford an especially “brilliant example . . . for the present . . . in the free bliss of their imagination” (VA 2:241/A 1:610). The content of such art is equally unrestricted. It does not have to be the idealized humanity beloved of the Greeks or the cheerful domesticity of much seventeenth-century Dutch art. It encompasses, rather, all “the depths and heights of the human heart as such, the universally human in its joys and sorrows, its strivings, deeds, and fates”—what Hegel, following Goethe, calls *Humanus*.²⁹

Yet with all its freedom, Hegel maintains that the art of the present and the future should still aim to fulfill the proper task of art and bring us into the presence of beauty: the artist may present any content in any form “if only it does not contradict the formal law of being simply beautiful [*überhaupt schön*] and capable of artistic treatment” (VA 2:235/A 1:605). This means that art must continue to portray the freedom and vitality of human beings. It should present whatever is “*living* [*lebendig*] in the human breast,” that is, “everything in which man as such is capable of being *at home* [*heimisch*].”³⁰ All that is to be avoided, therefore, is that in which human beings cannot find themselves at home—that which seeks to alienate or disorient the viewer—or that which in the human breast or nature is itself *dead*—that which is abstract, sterile, or purely negative.

Hegel clearly did not regard the requirement that contemporary art be beautiful as imposing any significant restriction on artists. Nor did he appear to think that painters would feel inhibited by the requirement that their exploration of abstract relations of color—their exploration of what Hegel calls the “objective music” of colors—be integrated into the depiction of concrete human freedom, as it was in the work of Jan van Eyck or Hans Memling (VA 2:228/A 1:599–600). These requirements, however, would be regarded by many artists after Hegel’s death as among the very ones that need to be resisted most strongly in the name of artistic freedom.

The aim of philosophical aesthetics, for Hegel, is not to dictate to artists a series of detailed “rules” that they should follow—especially not in the modern age of aesthetic freedom. It is the task of such aesthetics, however, to understand the nature of art and its distinctive role and function in human life. In Hegel’s judgment, the function of art is to enable us to encounter our own complex freedom, humanity, and vitality in the form of *beauty*. As we have seen, Hegel believes that art no longer satisfies the deepest religious needs of humanity in the modern Western world. Nonetheless, he thinks that we still have a profound and abiding need for beautiful art because we are *sensuous, imaginative* beings who require a sensuous, imaginative vision, not just a conceptual or felt understanding, of what it is to be truly free and human. Without such a vision, we lack an important dimension of self-awareness and so lead an impoverished life. The

challenge posed to students of post-Hegelian art by Hegel's powerful theory is to determine whether the unprecedented burgeoning of new aesthetic possibilities in such art has genuinely enriched our aesthetic experience or deprived us of the very thing that art is above all meant to afford us: a sense of our freedom and humanity in the contemplation of beauty.

The Essays

This introduction has done no more than provide an overview of Hegel's aesthetic theory. It ignores far too many of the subtle complexities of Hegel's views on art in general, its history, the different arts, and the myriad of individual works of art that he considers. Such subtle complexities are explored in the essays that follow.

Terry Pinkard first examines Hegel's hugely important distinction between the symbolic, classical, and romantic art forms. Pinkard notes that Hegel's identification of only these three art forms may initially seem implausible, but he argues that they are made necessary by the fact that they give expression to three fundamental conceptions of "what it means to be a 'minded,' *geistig*, spiritual agent."

The following five essays focus on what Hegel considers to be the principal arts. David Kolb analyzes Hegel's intricate and problematic account of architecture. He argues that although architecture is understood by Hegel to be an essentially symbolic art, it is actually held to achieve perfection in the classical architecture of the Greeks. My first essay considers Hegel's conception of sculptural beauty. It argues that Hegel understands sculpture to become more dramatic and more painterly as it develops, but that he would probably criticize twentieth-century sculpture for regressing to the condition of "symbolic architecture." John Sallis points to the central role played by color in Hegel's theory of painting. He discusses the differences Hegel discerns between painting and sculpture and highlights the strikingly "eccentric," off-center position that painting occupies in relation to all the other arts in Hegel's theory. Richard Eldridge relates Hegel's all too neglected account of music to other nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories. In particular, he examines Hegel's claim that purely instrumental music significantly embodies our inner life through "cadenced interjection," and he argues that this claim provides an important way of understanding the achievements of many twentieth-century composers. My second essay endeavors to shed some fresh light on Hegel's more familiar but often misinterpreted theory of tragedy. I suggest that tragedy, for Hegel, is rooted not in fate but in an unwillingness to yield, for which we ourselves are ultimately responsible.

Martin Donougho unravels with exemplary subtlety the multiple strands of Hegel's account of the "end" and the future of art and draws attention to significant parallels between Hegel's views and those of Arthur Danto. Jay Bernstein then further explores "the twentieth-century replays of Hegel's end of art doctrine" in the writings of Danto, Yves-Alain Bois, and Adorno. He comes to the conclusion that art's function now is less to aid the mind to know itself (Hegel's view) and more to serve as a placeholder for the claims of sensuous particularity and nature *against* "self-authorizing mindedness."

In this introduction (and elsewhere) I have argued that, for Hegel, the function of art is to give sensuous expression to human freedom.³¹ This commits Hegel, as I understand it, to the view that painting should offer concrete *images* of free human beings. By contrast, Robert Pippin—in an essay first published in a slightly different version in *Critical Inquiry*—makes a strong Hegelian case for the appropriateness of abstract, non-image-based art in modernity. Pippin argues that it is precisely in the experiments of abstraction that we see what modern, self-authorizing freedom, which has emancipated itself from the authority of nature, *looks like* when expressed in art. John Walker also considers the significance of Hegel's aesthetic theory in the distinctive conditions of modernity. He contends that, for Hegel, even though art and religion in modernity prove to be cognitively deficient in comparison with philosophy, they nonetheless keep us mindful of the claims of particularity, difference, and otherness. Hegel's philosophy is thus more complex than is often assumed, for it contains within itself a principle of aesthetic and religious *resistance* to its own "totalising claims."

As I remarked earlier, Hegel's thoughts about art are to be found not only in the lectures on aesthetics but also in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Rüdiger Bubner examines the place of the "religion of art" in Hegel's most famous text and concludes that in his discussion of that phenomenon, Hegel is not just looking back nostalgically at a bygone culture but is presenting a model for present-day (and future) religious, aesthetic, and social life. Finally, Judith Norman scrutinizes Hegel's relation to a group of writers whose views on art and poetry perhaps represent the most important alternative to Hegel's own views in the early nineteenth century: the German Romantics. Norman argues that Hegel's criticisms of the Romantics were overexaggerated and overly anxious, but that there nevertheless is a real difference between them: whereas, for Hegel, philosophy takes over and completes art's task of presenting the Absolute, for the Romantics, poetry "incompletes" philosophy by reminding it of its elusive, "incomprehensible" poetic conditions.

The authors included in this collection do not all agree with the views outlined in this introduction; nor, indeed, do they all agree with one

another. They are, however, all convinced of the continuing importance of Hegel's complex, subtle, and powerful aesthetic theory. Together their essays offer an outstanding, comprehensive analysis of Hegel's aesthetics for both the scholar and the newcomer.

The original idea for this volume came from Salim Kemal, who was to coedit it with me and to contribute an essay of his own. Sadly, Salim died in 1999 in the early stages of planning the project. In gratitude and friendship I dedicate this collection to his memory.

Notes

1. T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. R. Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone, 1997), 353.

2. Other English-language secondary texts on Hegel's aesthetics that readers might wish to consult include J. Kaminsky, *Hegel on Art: An Interpretation of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1962); *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy*, ed. W. E. Steinkraus and K. L. Schmitz (New Jersey: Humanities, 1980); S. Bungay, *Beauty and Truth: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); W. Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986); R. D. Winfield, *Stylistics: Rethinking the Artforms After Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996); M. Roche, *Tragedy and Comedy: A Systematic Study and a Critique of Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998); and *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. W. Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

3. G. W. F. Hegel, "Über einige charakteristische Unterschiede der alten Dichter [und der neueren]," in *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (1936; Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), 48–51.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, "Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism," in H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770–1801* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 511.

5. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 424–53.

6. See, for example, G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 292–315 (sections 553–77).

7. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. J. Hoffmeister, 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1977), 4/1:111, 120–24.

8. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). This was translated into English as G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). Further references to these texts will be given in the following form: VA 1:145/A 1:106 (with the German text cited first). I have occasionally altered Knox's translation. (Note that the pagination for Knox's translation is continuous through the two volumes. It should also be noted that the three-volume Moldenhauer-Michel edition of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics comprises

volumes 13, 14, and 15 of G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 20 vols. [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–70]).

9. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. H. Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995); G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2003); G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1826), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert, J. I. Kwon, and K. Berr (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004); and G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik* (1826), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert and B. Collenberg-Plotnikov (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004).

10. B. Wyss, *Hegel's Art History and the Critique of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 106.

11. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 334.

12. K. Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21, 24.

13. O. Pöggeler, ed., *Hegel in Berlin: Preussische Kulturpolitik und idealistische Ästhetik: Zum 150. Todestag des Philosophen* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1981), 247.

14. *Hegel in Berlin*, 87–88, 91.

15. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 654; and S. Houlgate, “Hegel and the Art of Painting,” in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, 62, 77–78.

16. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 11 (section 246 Addition).

17. G. W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. T. M. Knox and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 133.

18. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 105, 108.

19. F. Schiller, “Kallias, or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner” (1793), in *Classical and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 160 (February 23, 1793). Schiller's phrase neatly encapsulates Hegel's conception of beauty. Strictly speaking, however, Schiller's conception of beauty in the “Kallias” letters is somewhat different from that of Hegel. For Schiller, beauty is sensible form that is merely analogous to freedom, that merely *appears* to be free, whereas for Hegel beauty is the sensuous *expression* or *manifestation* of freedom itself.

20. See A. Julius, *Transgressions: The Offences of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 102.

21. I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 103 (section 9).

22. Hammermeister, *German Aesthetic Tradition*, 88. See also Hegel, VA 1:28/A 1:13.

23. Hegel, VA 2:228, 383–96/A 1:599–600, 2:727–38.

24. Hegel, VA 2:86, 92/A 1:485, 490. On the relativity of personal and national taste in art, see Hegel, VA 1:68/A 1:44–45.

25. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 416 (translation altered).

26. Hegel, *VA* 2:159, 3:211, 459/*A* 1:542–43, 2:949–50, 1145. Even after the Reformation, of course, Catholic religious art also continues to be produced (for example, by Rubens).

27. See S. Houlgate, “Hegel and the ‘End’ of Art,” *Owl of Minerva* 29, no. 1 (fall 1997): 1.

28. Hegel, *VA* 2:220, 231, 3:415, 457/*A* 1:593, 602, 2:1110, 1143.

29. Hegel, *VA* 2:237/*A* 1:607. See J. W. Goethe, “Die Geheimnisse,” in *Goethe’s Gedichte*, ed. F. Strehlke, 2 vols. (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1887), 2:48 (line 245: “*Humanus* heisst der Heilige, der Weise”).

30. Hegel, *VA* 2:238/*A* 1:607. Later in the lectures on aesthetics, Hegel also adds that art should never lack “reconciliation”; see Hegel, *VA* 3:494/*A* 2:1173.

31. See Houlgate, “Hegel and the ‘End’ of Art,” 15–19; and “Hegel and the Art of Painting,” 71–75.

HEGEL AND THE ARTS

Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art

Terry Pinkard

From his first published philosophical monograph in 1801 on the *Difference Between Schelling's and Fichte's Philosophies* to the end of his life, Hegel characterized modern life as “estranged from itself” (*entzweit*), as containing a “reflective” distance between itself and its practices. In his lectures on aesthetics in the 1820s, Hegel spoke of our modern, reflective culture as “Kantian” and noted that it had in effect made us into what he called “amphibious animals,” caught between a disenchanted natural world and a world in which we legislated the moral law for ourselves and secured for ourselves a “dignity” not to be found in nature.¹ Hegel went on to claim that the oppositions to be found in modern life encompassed not merely the apparent incompatibility between freedom and nature but also those between “duty” and the “warmth of heart,” between “inner freedom and nature’s external necessity,” and even (strangely, coming from Hegel himself) between “the dead concept, empty within itself, and the full concreteness of life.”² The goal of his own “speculative philosophy,” Hegel declared, was to supersede those oppositions within a philosophy that would contribute to bringing about a modern reconciliation in our own self-understandings; whereas it has come to seem to us moderns that we must metaphorically live in two opposed worlds, in fact the better view is that there is just one world (with certain tensions inherent in it), that we need not be “amphibians” to live in that world, and that this world, tensions and all, is more rational.

These are rather heavy burdens to be placed on any philosophy, certainly on aesthetics. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics open with some rather striking claims, most of which seem at first glance to be completely implausible unless one buys into the entire Hegelian system. He claims, for example, that there are three and only three art forms (symbolic, classical, and romantic), that each of them develops systematically out of the other *in that order*, and that they succeed each other historically *in that order*.³ Moreover, art is said to exhibit or to

present “the divine,” the truth (and sometimes the “genuinely true,” or perhaps “the real,” both of which are connoted by Hegel’s use of the term *das Wahrhaftige*), the “deepest” and “highest” interests of mankind, the “most comprehensive truths of spirit,” our “highest needs,” mankind’s “true interests,” and so forth.⁴ Likewise, Hegel is often portrayed as having proclaimed the “end of art” in the third, romantic form of art. Finally, Hegel claims that art (like philosophy and Christian religion) seeks to offer us a kind of “reconciliation” in its intimations that it can heal a kind of self-inflicted alienation of *Geist*, spirit, from itself, or at least to point to the way that religion and philosophy, if not art itself, can perform that healing function.

It is hard enough to sort out these claims (and from the standpoint of modern philology, to see which of them Hegel actually entertained), and it is equally difficult to come to some sort of evaluation of what is really being claimed. Hegel’s own statements about *Geist* bring out the very basic tension already at work in his theory. Over and over again, he tells us that *Geist* makes itself, gives itself its reality, that it is only what it makes of itself, and so forth; yet if there were no *Geist* already there, as it were, how could it “give itself” reality or be a product of itself? Hegel’s own statement to this effect near the beginning of his lectures on aesthetics brings out this puzzling feature:

The universal and absolute need from which art . . . springs has its origin in the fact that man is a *thinking* consciousness, i.e., that man makes out of himself *for-himself* what he is and what in general is. Things in nature are only *immediate* and *single*, while man as spirit *duplicates* himself, in that he *exists* in the way the things of nature exist, but he is to the same extent *for-himself*; he intuitively himself, represents himself to himself, thinks, and only by means of this active being-for-self is he spirit.⁵

The typical Hegelian points of emphasis are all in play here, particularly the emphasis on the agent’s self-relation—his “being-for-self”—as crucial to his agency. An agent is a “thing in nature” that is “immediate and single,” that is, an organism making its way around in its environment. An agent is also a *self-conscious* life whose nature as an agent is constituted by his self-relation, by how he “takes” himself to be; or to put it another way, as agents humans are, in Charles Taylor’s phrase, “self-interpreting animals.” To have such a self-relation as “subjectivity” is to be *Geist*, or, as we say now, to be an *agent*. Who we are as agents therefore depends on our sustaining a certain interpretation of ourselves over time. Animals, as Hegel says, live in peace with their surroundings in that no matter how intelligent or complexly social they may be, *who* they are is not an issue for

them; even complexly intelligent, highly social animals such as dolphins do not, as far as we can tell, have to raise the issue for themselves of what it means to be a dolphin, even if they are in a certain fashion in fact capable of being responsive to reasons. Our agency as self-interpretation, however, involves taking a stance, however implicit, on what it means to be human, that is, on what constitutes our “true interests,” “highest needs,” and what are the “most comprehensive truths,” on what ultimately matters to us. Unlike the “things of nature,” what it means to be human is always a question for us, since as self-interpreting animals it is always open to us to interpret ourselves differently than what we have done, and this constitutes part of what Hegel evocatively calls our “negativity.” In this Hegelian conception, we *come to be* the kinds of agents we are; we *actualize* certain self-interpretations in the ways we carry them out in practice, and this “negative” stance toward ourselves—of our never being just what we are, except insofar as we interpret ourselves as being that type of agent and sustain that type of interpretation—inflicts a kind of “wound,” a *Zerissenheit*, a manner of being internally torn apart that demands healing.⁶

The idea that self-consciousness in general and modern life in particular inflict on us a kind of self-estrangement in the form of attempts to actualize our concepts of ourselves and to keep that actualization both in existence and “in truth”—to “get it right” in such actualizations, to lead true or genuine lives—suggests, of course, that some kind of psychological account of human personality is at stake in agency; it suggests that some types of pain may be too much or that there might be certain thresholds of such grief so high that they lead to dissolutions of collective attempts at realizing certain conceptions of agency. However, despite its psychological overtones (and despite whatever psychological implications it might have), Hegel’s theory is, peculiarly enough, *not* a psychological account (at least in that sense) at all. Hegel aims rather at providing a comprehensive account of the conditions under which forms of life fail and succeed by virtue of their having committed themselves to certain determinate views of what it *means* to be an agent—or more generally, what it means to be human—and of having committed themselves to broadly philosophical and religious views about the ultimate locus of intelligibility for those meanings. The goal of Hegel’s theory is a comprehensive account of how certain collective self-understandings can be said to fail or succeed through an account of how certain collective expressions of normativity dissolve and fail because of their *irrationality*, not because of their supposed conflicts with any deep-seated psychological features of humans.⁷ In this way, Hegel’s theory is far more tied into a Kantian (or better, post-Kantian) conception of an agent acting according to his conception of law and into conditions under which the agent can be said to fail in

keeping faith with the law because of certain types of contradiction or tension in that conception of law. In fact, it is part and parcel of such an account that a type of agency could be said to fail—in that it cannot achieve what it is seeking to achieve—even though the agents themselves are unaware of their failure and are perhaps even happy (although nonetheless ignorant of their failure) while being in that state.

Speculative Problems

Clearly much is packed into such a conception, and it is perhaps not surprising that Hegel's attempts to work that idea out in all its proper qualifications and with all the arguments necessary to sustain such a view amount to one of the largest and densest sets of works in the history of philosophy. Part of the density is powered by Hegel's own insistence on a "speculative" approach to these issues that supposedly avoids the dilemmas contained within more "one-sided" comprehensive accounts offered by what he always called the "understanding." The idea of such a "speculative" approach rests on Hegel's generalization of a certain "Kantian paradox" into a more inclusive conception of normative authority.⁸ The problem arises first in Kant's practical philosophy, where he argues that norms cannot be practically and unconditionally binding on us unless we can regard ourselves as having instituted those norms themselves. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant says: "The will is therefore not merely subject to the law, but is so subject that it must be considered as also *giving the law to itself* and precisely on this account as first of all subject to the law (which it can regard itself as instituting)."⁹ Indeed, as is well known, Kant attributes the failure of all prior moral philosophy to a failure to recognize this truth.¹⁰

However, as Kant came to see when he was writing the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that conception landed him in a paradoxical situation which resulted from two commitments on his part: first, that an *arbitrary* will (*Willkür*) could not obligate us, since only a principled, rational will could actually bind us to its requirements; and second, that only a *self-legislated* principle (or "law") could obligate us. The paradox arises out of the realization that prior to such self-legislation, we would have no principles, hence we would have only "arbitrary" (*willkürlich*) wills whose legislation could not therefore bind us; but if we had some rational principle in place prior to such legislation, then since it was not itself self-legislated, we could also not be bound by it.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant called this the "fact of reason,"

an insistence that we cannot but find ourselves “always, already” committed to the claims of reason in undertaking any commitment, that any act of commitment itself “always, already” presupposed a commitment to reason, something that we are compelled to acknowledge while simultaneously acknowledging that this prior commitment is self-legislated (and not just “self-imposed”). By the time of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant had come up with the idea of “aesthetic judgment” as a paradigm of the way in which we can be subject to norms that we institute; such aesthetic judgments are “universally communicable” without at the same time invoking concepts (general rules) for their normative import. The “genius” in art is that person who can create the rule that others then must follow.

Hegel took the “Kantian paradox” to be at the heart of the problems involved in almost all post-Kantian philosophy, and indeed, of the very future of critical philosophy and the “Copernican” turn itself. Hegel’s point was that the “paradox” was at work in all aspects of normativity, and resolving the paradox by appeal to any conception of reasons that were not self-legislated simply begged all the questions that Kant’s Copernican revolution in philosophy, with its placing of spontaneity front and center of its conception of knowledge and action, had raised.

In his 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argued that the “paradox” is best expressed in terms of a certain *sociality* of agency, of our being and becoming agents only in and through reciprocal recognition. That is, the status of “being an agent” is not a metaphysical or empirical fact about us; it is a socially conferred, normative *status*, and becoming an agent is to be construed as an achievement, not as a metaphysical or empirical property we suddenly come to possess. Just as the very notions of things like *my* property require recognition from others, so even seemingly bedrock matters, such as the ascription of desires as *mine*, also require social recognition.¹¹ (Hegel’s arguments for this are quite drawn out, and they obviously bear similarities and differences with the now-familiar Wittgensteinian ideas concerning the impossibility of private languages and the social conditions of the possibility of rule-following.) I become, in the abstract, most fully an agent when the commitments which I take myself to have undertaken are also recognized by others in the way that I take myself to have recognized them.¹² More concretely, it has to do with others recognizing me to be acting under the descriptions that I take myself to be acting under. In his initial formulation, Hegel (quite famously) characterized the process of such social recognition as a “struggle” for recognition, namely, a struggle over who sets the standards by which such recognition itself is to be judged (for example, a struggle over whether a putative master’s desires should count as obligatory reasons for a putative slave). The outcome of this struggle over mastery and servitude, however,

fails at what it sets out to accomplish since it results in a collective identity that neither the master nor the slave can sustain. The master remains subject to his own arbitrary desires taken as normative (and he thus fails to win the freedom he thought he had achieved and, as dependent on the slave's recognition of him, he fails to achieve the self-sufficiency he both sought and claimed for himself), whereas the slave comes to understand that the master's desires are just that—desires, not genuine reasons—even while he comes to understand that his own liberation would come from his subjecting himself to genuine reasons. This sets the stage for a solution which, abstractly put, would be for each of us to be *both* masters and slaves to the other, and to eschew all dreams of a world *either* where freedom is gained through the domination of others *or* where nobody is either master or slave—that is, where everybody would be neither lawgiver nor subject to the law—since that would be a world beyond politics, embodiment, and finitude.¹³ That, however, is only the abstract solution, and it requires far more effort to bring it about (even as a philosophical solution) than it does to state it. It does, however, lead Hegel to a social and developmental conception of agency in which, on his account, we *are* agents by virtue of being socially recognized as having that status, we *become* agents by being initiated into social practices, and whatever legitimate binding force those practices *de facto* seem to have for us can be comprehended only *historically*, in terms of a complex narrative about how what *is* required *came to be* required by virtue of the very determinate failures of past collective attempts at determining what it means to be human.

Truth, the Ideal, and Symbolic Art

How to sort through the issues that come up for this kind of dialectical, speculative, and “phenomenological” aesthetic theory is difficult to state in any economical way. The problem that Hegel sees art, religion, and philosophy as trying to come to terms with is that of comprehending what it would be to express freedom in the natural, material world (and, as part of his developmental story, in the modern developed social world of complex market economies and state bureaucracies). What drives Hegel's type of developmental story is a self-incurred dissatisfaction with the types of agency constituted by collective attempts at living out particular kinds of self-conception (in his own language, by particular shapes and concretizations of the Idea). Art, like religion and philosophy, is a collective practice of self-education about this, a way of collectively reflecting on what it means to be human.

Or to put it differently, the outcome of this kind of story is our gradual realization that *Geist*, agency itself, is not a natural kind; it is socially constituted, and if it does not “give itself existence” (to use Hegel’s phrase), it does not exist (in a manner wholly analogous to the way in which, absent social recognition there can be no lawyers or professors—one cannot become a lawyer in a social setting where that status is nonexistent). To designate that whole, or totality, of such norms that are metaphorically striving to give themselves existence, Hegel uses one of his key systematic terms, the *Idea*, which he characterizes as “the unity of concept and objectivity” and “the unity of concept and reality.”¹⁴ Moreover, this “unity of concept and reality” as “Idea” is said (metaphorically) to strive to “realize” itself. The “Idea,” that is, is in one sense a kind of totality of norms which is “nothing” until it is realized in practice, and, as normative, it tends to “make itself true” through the motivations that agents come to have by virtue of inhabiting the social roles available to them in a determinate form of life (by having, that is, those norms as “their own”). The Idea, moreover, is more than just a set of norms; it also includes within itself the ground of intelligibility of those norms, that is, some fairly comprehensive conception of why these norms should and do matter to us, why we should care about realizing them.

As a practice carried out within the historical development of the Idea’s self-realization—that is, a collective attempt by humanity to articulate for itself just what the “whole” is within which it orients itself and interprets itself—art matters to us as a crucial part of the developmental narrative of humanity’s attempt to comprehend itself, a role that art plays in its attempts to display truth in the form of *beauty*, the “sensuous showing-forth of the Idea,” that is, a sensuous presentation of what ultimately matters for us.¹⁵ Art strives to *show* us what ultimately matters to us through a unity of concept and sense—namely, through the individual work of art itself by providing an experience of *what it is* that we are trying to achieve as self-relating creatures and what *it would be like* to have achieved it or to be in the process of achieving it.

Art as Idea, therefore, is one way of reflecting and reassuring ourselves about the meaning of what it is to be human; and since for “we moderns” that meaning has come to be grasped as freedom, *for us* art is therefore a type of collective self-reflection on what it means to be human, in the form of a beautiful sensuous presentation of what *it would be like* to be free. Since art is the exhibition of this “Idea” in the form of beauty, the fundamental issue with art itself must be therefore whether the full meaning of freedom can be given an adequate aesthetic presentation—whether a “beautiful” individual work of art can give us the experience of what it would be like to be successfully free agents.

The idea that art “strives for truth” is linked with its being the Idea in its “sensuous showing-forth.” For Hegel, truth is neither a relation of coherence among concepts nor is it primarily a correspondence between representations and things external to them, and it is also not equivalent to “warranted assertibility.” For Hegel, truth functions as a kind of “primitive” which cannot be defined in terms of anything more fundamental than itself but which nonetheless is capable of a full *unfolding* (an *Entfaltung*) within the proper kind of reflective activity (such as Hegel’s own *Phenomenology* or *Logic*). Hegel’s initially puzzling statements about truth—that truth does not have to do with the concept’s corresponding to the object but with the object’s corresponding to the concept—is his own provocative way of phrasing his view about normativity in general; namely that, to use Robert Brandom’s phrase, the difference between the normative and the nonnormative (or factual) is itself a normative distinction, a matter of how we ought to treat things, and that what seems like the inevitable choice between correspondence, coherence, and warranted assertibility conceptions of truth is itself only motivated by the ultimately untenable view of there being some kind of metaphysical line that separates mind and world.¹⁶ In Hegel’s view, our concepts of ourselves and the world embody an “ought,” a conception of what it would mean for something to be the *best exemplification* of what it is. Although at the same time both Aristotelian and Kantian in inspiration (like so many of Hegel’s views), this view eschews any teleological conception of nature. For “we moderns” nature is meaningless, dedivinized, devoid of spirit (*geistlos*, as Hegel calls it); there is no better and worse in it.¹⁷ Indeed, that is the problem with nature; properly explained by the means of modern natural science, nature displays itself to reflection as simply incapable on its own of organizing itself into “better exemplifications.” (Hegel calls this the “impotence [*Ohnmacht*] of nature.”)¹⁸ It is only when life appears in nature that it makes sense to speak of “better” and “worse,” since only organisms display the kind of self-directing, functional teleological structure that makes the application of such terms meaningful. This is made clearer when one reflects on the application of the concept of disease; it makes sense to speak of an organism as diseased when it is in some kind of state that is incompatible with its being the best exemplification of its sort that it can be (when it is prevented from achieving goals proper to the internal teleology of that organism); but it makes no sense to speak of a diseased planetary system, a diseased mountain range, and so on. Although life displays the kind of structure that makes the range of terms having to do with “better” and “worse” applicable, as “life” nature is nonetheless still incapable of reflecting on that structure or of bringing it about as a goal; even at the stage of life, nature is still “impotent.” When

we arrive at human beings, though, this changes, and the very idea of the “best” human life ceases to be fixed by nature itself and comes to be comprehended, in Hegel’s very complex phenomenology of our own mindedness, by the history of our collective self-conceptions; a history grasped in terms of how the very determinate failures of earlier self-conceptions have led, unavoidably, to the modern self-conception not only as required by those failures but also as having “revealed” itself as the truth.

As striving for such truth, art is always committing itself to display what Hegel (using the terms of his day) calls the “Ideal,” that is, “the truly concrete *Idea* [that] produces its true configuration [*Gestalt*].”¹⁹ To say therefore that art strives after the “Ideal” is, to put it more prosaically, to say that it strives for a kind of *embodied norm*, a kind of singular sensuous presentation in the form of beauty of what it means to be a “minded,” *geistig*, spiritual agent in its most exemplary form.²⁰ Art does not seek to formulate universal principles (as philosophy does) but rather to display such norms in singular works of beauty. Since art seeks to display what it means to be “minded,” Hegel dismisses the idea that natural beauty has any real significance for us however much “attraction” it may otherwise have. Beauty has a meaning for us to the extent that it “shows” us something about what it means to be human; natural beauty therefore can show us little about this, except only insofar as we can be brought to see various natural forms as intimating our own lives or offering some foreshadowing of them. Thus, from the standpoint of art, certain natural organic forms (particularly those of animals) may display to us what it is like, for example, to be self-moving, to be seeking one’s and one’s group’s good, or perhaps to reveal some very general and very abstract truth about our finite, material embodiment (such as the brevity of the flower’s life showing us something about the contingency and brevity of our own lives—a very abstract truth indeed).

Since the Ideal is that which shows us in aesthetic form what it would mean to exemplify humanity in a particular way, art displays the Ideal as a unity of universal and particular, that is, the way in which the demands of the “law” on humans are carried out by particular humans in a natural and social world in such a way that their actions are “their own,” reflective of them as individuals. Part of Hegel’s remarkable claim about art is that only Greek art can manifest the Ideal in this sense, and that all modern art necessarily falls short of the Ideal—that the “Ideal” is fundamentally unsatisfactory for us as real flesh-and-blood humans and that the self-incurred dissatisfaction with the “Ideal” pushes us on to a mode of art that is, peculiarly, less like art the more modern it becomes.

This helps to understand just why Hegel would insist on the initially implausible claim that there are only three art forms that develop out of

each other and succeed each other historically. The meaning of agency as self-determining is itself a historical achievement, not a metaphysical or empirical fact about us. The historical origins of this self-conception begin with our simply finding ourselves already oriented to some kind of “whole” of which we are parts and which we take to be the “origin” of our humanity and which thereby sustains us. Thought about this “whole” is thus always *mythical* at its outset; it seeks to give an account and reassurance of what might otherwise look like a purely self-bootstrapping appearance of agency, in terms of some kind of mythic origin of humanity (of mythic origins of freedom, language, or of this or that way of life). We begin reflection on what it means to be human by finding ourselves to be a mystery to ourselves, and in their origins, therefore, both art and religion are mixed together in the way each offers a mythic origin for human freedom. Art is therefore at first “symbolic” art in which the space of reasons in terms of which we justify ourselves to each other remains relatively abstract (that is, the Idea is only abstractly worked out).²¹ Symbols, in this Hegelian sense, “hint at” something else that the symbol itself cannot quite fully express, and what is being hinted at is the mythically conceived origin of human freedom, the divine “whole” that brings about the existence and sustains the continued lives of the “minded” creatures we are. Since this origin remains a “mystery,” symbolic art is necessarily abstract, sometimes possessing great technical beauty, but always hinting at more than it can actually express, and it thus tends to be an art of the sublime; that is, of seeking natural phenomena that serve to remind us of our own mindedness. And from being an art of the sublime, symbolic art tends to become the art of pantheism, of the attempt to say the unsayable and represent the unrepresentable, as it seeks to show the unitary divine substance that is the one in everything.

For Hegel’s overall narrative to work, symbolic art—the art of the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, and Jews—must be unsatisfying not because it makes us unhappy in any sense but because the pictures of being human which it offers cannot sustain themselves. The appeal to the “unsayable” and the “unrepresentable” (or even to the “sublime”) is itself so abstract that the content (what is being said) and the form, the mode of “saying it” (through parables, poems, sculptures, or anything else), connect with each other in only fairly arbitrary ways. Hegel often expresses this as its lacking some kind of proper fit between an inner, subjective sense of things and an outer, material expression of that interiority; his point, though, is that symbolic art incurs a dissatisfaction with itself, since it cannot give us the kind of comprehension of the “Idea” we are seeking in art. The problem with symbolic art lies, in Hegel’s terms, in its “finitude,” its conception of the intelligibility of our meaning-giving

and sustaining practices as lying on the other side of a metaphysical line dividing consciousness from the world. Symbolic art's failure to satisfy spirit's "true interests" lies in the way it sets limits to the intelligibility of agency, denying the intelligibility of, for example, freedom by ascribing it to something beyond the "limit," something enigmatic that sets the limit for us in an unintelligible way.

Hegel presents this as an opposition of content and form, and he illustrates this by remarking on how symbolic works of art (of which the greatest, he thought, were the ancient Egyptian) do not link in any clear way to the human realities they are trying to portray. Exactly why and how this or that statue of a cat or bird or man-beast is supposed to link to the human reality of freedom—how it functions as "Idea," as the ultimate ground of intelligibility giving us a sense of where we stand in the "whole"—is in the nature of symbolic art necessarily unclear. Symbolic art receives what determinacy it has only from its place in a structured worldview, as part of a religion that configures and expresses a whole way of life (which is why contemporary "symbolic" art that tries to say the unsayable is linked only to individuals or small subgroups, such as art critics and gallery goers, who must interpret the work not in terms of some larger, shared worldview but in terms of some shared theory about art).

As art (and religion) do their self-educative work in history, the agents for whom symbolic art is appropriate and expressive of their way of life and self-understanding find that putting the conditions of intelligibility off into some "beyond," on the other side of a "limit" that we cannot cross, conflicts with their growing understanding that it is they who set such limits and, moreover, it is they who are forever pushing those limits back. Symbolic art fails to achieve the kind of agency that can be intelligible to itself about what it is that it is trying to accomplish; the inadequacy of symbolic art is really about the change in the status of agents who find it inadequate to *them* as they have come to be.

From Symbolic to Classical Art

Although quite a lot of text is devoted to the nature of symbolic art, it is also clearly not what interests Hegel; he is interested in the oppositions and relations between what he calls "classical" art (the art of ancient Greece) and "romantic" art (under which all Christian art is included). The move from symbolic to classical art consists in portraying the divine not as an unintelligible "other" lying on the far side of the supposed metaphysical divide between mind and world; but in portraying the divine as

partially human: as embodied although immortal gods whose motivations are sometimes unclear even to themselves. As partially intelligible, these divine lawgivers render our own legislative activities more intelligible to ourselves. Only classical art, Hegel argues, achieves and even *can* achieve the “ideal,” which is to say that only classical art achieves a purely *aesthetic* representation of what it would mean to be free. However, this very achievement of classical art also proves to be its fundamental limitation, since a purely *aesthetic* presentation of freedom must inherently fail to be an adequate exhibition of the meaning of freedom. If it is not to be symbolic (or finally merely didactic), art must present its content in the form of beauty.²² Thus, for it to be art—for it to be *beautiful*—it must present its content not as a series of arguments or principles but as something to be *experienced*, as something that is not simply to be theoretically contemplated or reflected on.

Whereas the failure of symbolic art has to do with its denial of a certain type of free sense-making activity as ultimately intelligible to itself, the success of classical art has to do with the way it grows out of this inadequacy by attempting to show what it would be like to be an agent with the capacity for free sense-making activities in such a way that the free individual would be a law unto himself.²³ For such an individual to be *ideal* in Hegel’s sense, the free subject must therefore be *self-sufficient*, since any external limit to his freedom would be at odds with what it means to be free. The *self-sufficient* individual must have the “law” present in him as an individual; that is, he cannot be subject to any law given outside of his own activities, while on the other hand, he also cannot be “lawless,” merely acting on his own whims. Freedom as self-sufficiency is thus the paradigmatic aesthetic interpretation of freedom; it sees the self-relation as complete in itself, not requiring any mediation by an other. Thus, art inherently seeks to display the meaning of freedom in the “shape” of individuals—that is, as a project of striving for the “beautiful,” art inherently seeks to show that freedom means to *be* this or that type of *individual*.

However, this in essence continues the mythical interpretation of freedom: confronted with the Kantian paradox, all such purely aesthetic attempts must locate the origin of the law in the mythical past, in some kind of original *divine* law-giving activity. Classical art—the art of ancient Greece—Hegel says, tends to have its subjects “transferred to the age of myths, or, in general, to the bygone days of the past, as the best ground for their actualization.”²⁴ In the developmental story Hegel is telling, this achieves for us an active distancing of ourselves from nature, a refusal, as it were, to let nature (as the unintelligible “other”) determine the shape of the norms to which we hold ourselves. The achievement of classical art is therefore a sense of freedom as the Ideal, as an embodied norm, the

unity of universality and particularity. In its ideal form, the free agent relies on himself alone, is the law unto himself, and is thus in “repose” (*Ruhe*).²⁵ This “Ideal,” of course, is expressed paradigmatically by the Greek gods (as given human form) and then derivatively by mythical “heroes” (who have some type of connection to divinity), and it offers the “classical” meaning of freedom as a form of “self-sufficiency.” To be human is thus taken to be (ideally) self-sufficient, which in turn is taken to consist of a kind of self-containment.²⁶ (One thinks, of course, of Aristotle’s notion of human flourishing as involving “self-sufficiency,” such that a life of *eudaimonia*, “flourishing,” would be lacking in nothing, as the most dialectically sophisticated and final expression of that Greek ideal.)

The deficiency of classical art has to do with the problems contained in such self-sufficiency, and Hegel’s arguments for this are laid out in the section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* on “Freedom and Self-Sufficiency” (*Selbständigkeit*) from which the dialectic of mastery and servitude results. Such self-sufficiency cannot survive its confrontation with other putatively self-sufficient agents—unless the agents in question are gods. Hegel thought that such a “classical” conception of freedom as “repose” and self-sufficiency was best expressed in sculpture, since the statue in particular expresses aesthetically what it means to be in such “repose,” to be self-contained, in that way.

The problem for Greek life (and thus for classical art) is whether such a meaning of freedom can be lived out for humans, not just for their gods, and, at an even deeper level, whether such an aesthetic version of the meaning of freedom can be sustained even for the gods themselves. The Greek gods are only projections, Hegel argues, of our own need for an exhibition, a *Darstellung*, of what a distinctively free human life would be, and although for the Greeks the gods seemed to be more alive than even the humans who worshipped them, they turned out to be only stone idols, lacking any effective reality.²⁷ In an evocative passage, Hegel notes that those statues of the gods seem to have a kind of mourning to them, as if they already had some intimation of their fate.²⁸ It is thus not surprising that Hegel thought that such a view of what life might be like at its highest could only be sustained with a view of nature that saw it as teleologically structured and fundamentally in harmony with human desires and needs. (Such a view seems to be front and center in a large part of Aristotle’s writings—or at least a view that nature is neither intrinsically hostile nor simply indifferent to human needs and desires, even if from time to time bad fortune may befall an otherwise good, self-sufficient person, whose virtue will nonetheless enable him to bear up under those circumstances and to realize that his life is nonetheless a good one.) For actual individuals, the problems with such an aesthetic presentation of

freedom as self-sufficiency come out of the inevitable conflicts between different “self-sufficient” individuals who each claim to be following the demands of the law. Aesthetically, either such conflicts have to resolve themselves in an automatic and beautiful harmony that *spontaneously* issues from such conflicts (as is the case with stories about the gods, for whom such harmony is possible because they are eternal and do not have the option of staking their lives on any outcome); or it has to be *shown how* there is a “beautiful” resolution of such conflicts such that the natural harmony of life is thereby restored.

The latter appears in Greek tragedy, which attempts to show how the conflicts that necessarily arise within Greek life are themselves *aesthetically* restored to harmony—for example, the conflict between the demand of tradition and piety and the demands of political life, as in Hegel’s interpretation of *Antigone*. Such tragedy emerges when there is a conflict between equally valid but incompatible norms or values, represented by individuals who embody those norms and who therefore must come into conflict with each other without there being any way of resolving the conflict; each character must therefore be both in the right and in the wrong. However, since as Hegel says, “eternal justice . . . cannot suffer the conflict and contradiction of naturally harmonious ethical powers to be victorious and permanent in truth and actuality,” the conflict must be reconciled so that the contradiction is overcome.²⁹ This is, however, *only* an aesthetic solution to the contradiction; although the individual must be seen to retain his nobility of character in his downfall (as is the case with Oedipus), or both characters must be punished so that justice is done (as is the case with Antigone and Creon), such solutions do not resolve the deeper conflict contained in forms of life in which agents take themselves to be free individuals who nonetheless must keep faith with laws they have not legislated for themselves and who nonetheless see these laws as expressing *who* they most deeply are. When such individuals are confronted with incompatible unconditional demands (as Hegel thinks Antigone is), the individual is compelled to place herself in the position of being the final judge of which of these demands is to be fulfilled, that is, of being the self-sufficient authority who determines which law demands her allegiance. In *Antigone*, the chorus in fact tells Antigone that “your self-sufficiency has brought you down.”³⁰ The corresponding guilt that Antigone feels (by violating Creon’s edicts) is matched by her conviction that she is also right; and the punishment meted out by fate (Antigone’s death by suicide and the destruction of everything Creon holds dear) is supposed to reconcile us to this conflict. This purely *aesthetic* reconciliation provides the internal provocation—that is, one that is already there in Greek life—for Greeks to become “reflective individuals” and thereby to distance themselves from the harmony they had assumed existed in their social life and in the

natural order, which in turn makes that spontaneously produced harmony impossible to achieve. The Greek understanding of humanity as “free individuality” required there to be a harmony between our own activities of sense-making and nature itself (as a teleologically structured whole), and what its art revealed to itself are the multiple ways in which that conception of freedom is unsatisfactory, precisely in the way it can offer only an aesthetic solution to the conflicts that necessarily lie at the basis of its form of life.

The dissatisfaction of Greek life with itself displayed in its tragedies and comedies is self-incurred, not the result of some fortuitous external force, and that dissatisfaction shows not only the limits of *classical* art but of *art* itself. Hegel says of classical art that

classical beauty has for what is internal in it the free self-sufficient [*selbständig*] meaning, i.e., not a meaning *of* this and that but what means itself and therefore what interprets itself. This is the spiritual, which in general makes itself into an object to itself. In this objectivity of itself it then has the form of *externality* which, as identical with what is internal to it, is therefore on its side the meaning of its own self and, in knowing itself, it points to itself.³¹

What is distinctive about *Geist* is that it “means itself” and “interprets itself”—it need not postulate something “beyond” itself, on the other side of the metaphysical divide, that “founds” its meaning. Instead, *Geist* is self-authorizing. The “beautiful individual” of Greek art in the form of a divinity or a mythical hero is portrayed as a law unto himself, as having it within his power to establish the principles of conduct, not merely for himself but for whole communities, and Antigone’s tragedy shows how such a self-authorizing individual is at odds with the beautiful but nonetheless limited Greek conception of divinity and divine law. If the outcomes of both Oedipus’s or Antigone’s actions display to them and to the viewers of the tragic play the failure of their agency—failures in the way the world in which they lived brought out meanings to their actions that were not originally in the actions as they were carried out (or, as in the case of Antigone, where there is a realization that as she acts she is already, necessarily, guilty *while still* being in the right)—then the attempt to remove those “finite” limitations provokes a “turn inward,” an attempt to carve out an area of subjective life in which the contingencies of the world cannot limit agency in what it means to itself. That inward realm, in Hegel’s account, turns out to involve various forms of stoicism, skepticism, Epicureanism, and finally, Christian conscience (and the Christian practices of forgiveness of and reconciliation among sinners). The gap between intention and the meaning of the act—between what I took myself to be

doing and what I really did and a shift therefore in the conception of that to which I can be held responsible—opens up in a way that is both required in Greek life (and classical art) and impossible to sustain within it.

In Hegel's telling, the origins of Greek civilization are aesthetic, not doctrinal; Homer and Hesiod are its founders. As it develops itself, its conception of the whole (the Greek "Idea"), originally formulated aesthetically, becomes more philosophical, and as it does, the strains within this originally aesthetic "Idea" begin to reveal themselves more clearly to the participants in that form of life. As the intelligibility of that form of life begins to dissolve under those pressures, it becomes clear that the transition from the dissolution of classical art to that of modern, "romantic" art cannot therefore be itself made *aesthetically*. As it were, telling new and more beautiful stories about the gods and heroes simply cannot overcome the experienced dissatisfaction with the ancient way of life, at least as that dissatisfaction was lived through by generations of people. Whereas the Greeks were able to tell themselves a mythical, aesthetically satisfying story about how their gods triumphed over the titans (and thus told themselves an aesthetically satisfying story about what it might mean to achieve a liberation from the purely natural—so that the Greeks *gave themselves* their gods in a purely aesthetic manner), no such purely aesthetic story, no new mythic tales of a "war of the gods," can resolve the problems inherent in Greek life itself. Hegel's thesis is thus fairly stark: what it means for a finite, embodied human to be free cannot be given an adequate aesthetic presentation; and art, as attempting to provide a reflection on what it means to be human, necessarily fails in its task and this failure is expressed within art itself, not through an external reflection on art.

The internal failure of classical art on its own terms historically signaled a profound shift in the meaning and social status of art itself. Having come to a self-consciousness about itself as incapable of adequately embodying the "Ideal," art subordinated itself to something "beyond" itself, something that, metaphorically speaking, sits on the other side of the supposed metaphysical line dividing the artistic consciousness from the truth; namely, Christian religion, in which the inwardness and subjectivity that the failure of classical civilization itself provoked comes into its own as a claim about the truth about humanity.

Romantic (Modern) Art

Romantic art thus begins with the conviction that what we mean by our actions is not completely disclosed by what we do and that there is therefore an "inwardness" which must be discovered or uncovered if we are to

find out who we really are. Hegel's more or less phenomenological treatment of the development of romantic art rests on his view, not so much argued in the lectures on aesthetics as simply put into play there, that religion goes through a kind of dissolution similar to art's own dissolution. Christian religion "reveals" the meaning of humanity to be "infinite subjectivity," self-determining freedom, which itself can only be given what Hegel calls a "representational" (relying on the term *Vorstellung*) treatment; the mythical lawgiver at the origin of freedom is God-become-man, who therefore mythically moves over from one side of the metaphysical line separating consciousness from the true (what exists in-itself) and puts himself into human form, revealing to us in the world that our "vocation" is freedom. Christian religion, however, still remains metaphysical in that God is *represented* as both immanent and transcendent at the same time; we achieve the truth of the matter only, first, in the philosophical comprehension of what religion is about (itself provoked by Christian religion's recognition that it requires a theology, which in turn provokes the development of a modern, independent philosophy) and, second, in the philosophical comprehension that the picture of a metaphysical line separating mind and world (or consciousness and the in-itself) itself dissolves under the pressures it puts on itself, leaving us finally with a not only post-Cartesian but also post-Kantian picture of ourselves as fully capable of grasping what is in-itself—in short, capable of grasping the truth of the world before us.

Thus romantic art begins as religious art, as the aesthetic exhibition of religious (and eventually theological) truths; but its own dynamic drives it to develop out of itself a conception of the truth of humanity as *individuality*, as each person having a rich inner life, an "infinite subjectivity" that eventually detaches itself from its religious origins and comes to be concerned with itself in its prosaic, mundane world. Romantic art thus becomes fully modern art—secular, fractured, in which "man wants to see the present itself as it is—even at the cost of sacrificing beauty and ideality of content and appearance—as a live presence recreated by art, as his own human and spiritual work."³²

Thus, modern art is driven to a different sense of the dramatic from that of the classical. In modern, "romantic" (and especially post-Christian) dramatic art, the characters are not so much stating a *pathos* that they embody and then firmly setting out on their paths (as they do in classical art), but rather are engaged in a kind of social dance in which they not only worry about what they in fact feel, but also worry if what they feel is real, worry about how they *should* feel, and constantly offer explanations to each other about all these things in an effort to determine what it is that is going on "within" themselves. (So many modern dramas involve lovers who don't know at first that they are in love, or who deny that they are, or

who are tricked into recognizing that they are, or who believe that they love one person when they really love another, and so on. Hegel even makes a quip about those moderns who “do not suppose themselves to actually be in love until they encounter in and around themselves the very same feelings and situations [as those described in the romances].”³³

Although modern art at first understands itself as having cut itself free from the limits set by religion, it soon discovers within its own development the impossibility of a fully aesthetic comprehension of the “infinite subjectivity” opened by Christianity. Shakespeare’s success at portraying this, Hegel thinks, is only partial, and he accomplishes what he does only by placing his ideal figures in civil wars, where their “self-sufficiency” can be made plausible in modern terms. Goethe and Schiller, Hegel also notes, attempted the same thing but were much less successful.³⁴ Indeed, the lack of such ideal heroes in modern, prosaic life is not something to be lamented: “It would be inappropriate,” Hegel notes, “to set up, for our time too, ideal figures, e.g., of judges or monarchs,” since such figures would in fact be direct attacks on the hard-fought and still fragile achievements of the rule of law and the constitutional order.³⁵ (One wonders what Hegel would have made of the contemporary American “Western” film, with its heroic lone cowboys bringing justice to town, or John Ford’s ironic deconstructions of that myth.)

Romantic art as *modern* art thus loses its “vocation” *as art* for us, for although it remains crucial and irreplaceable in human experience, it cannot satisfy us on its own since it seeks something—namely, a comprehensive aesthetic exhibition of the meaning of freedom—that it cannot in principle provide. This is hardly the “end of art,” at least in any sense of finality—as if no new artworks would be created, art would become unimportant, or there could be no innovation in art. In an often-quoted and memorable passage, Hegel says:

The peculiar nature of artistic production and of works of art no longer fills our highest need. We have got beyond venerating works of art as divine and worshipping them. The impression they make is of a more reflective kind, and what they arouse in us needs a higher touchstone and a different test. Thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine art. . . . In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past.³⁶

Thus, despite modern art’s own self-understanding as having “secularized” itself, art’s object is still the “divine,” but as Hegel puts it, in modern art’s coming to terms with its own necessary limitations as art, “in this self-transcendence art is nevertheless a withdrawal of man into himself, a

descent into his own breast, whereby art strips away from itself all fixed restriction to a specific range of content and treatment, and makes *Humanus* its new holy of holies.”³⁷ In making these two claims together, it is clear that Hegel is shifting the meaning of “divine” from its normal usage and redescribing it in terms of his view of the absolute as *Geist*, as self-determination, as mankind’s “true” or “highest interests.” What is “divine” in humans is exhibited or “shown” aesthetically in art, is represented mythically in religion, and is only conceptually comprehended in thought (that is, philosophy).³⁸ Hegel’s bluntness about the role of religion in this collective endeavor is quite striking: the proper understanding of freedom as self-determination is philosophical and conceptual, not “representational” or mythical, as it must be for religion. Whereas art seeks to locate the origin of freedom in aesthetically complete individuals (who simply embody the right, or the “universal,” and the particular as unified in themselves), and religion seeks to locate the origin of freedom in some kind of relation to an external divinity or a revelation of some sort, the conceptual approach to freedom seeks to understand it as a “speculative truth” (the Kantian paradox), in which our own individual and collective practices of self-determination are to be comprehended as social and historical *achievements*, not as metaphysical structures. The inadequacy of art to capture this self-understanding for us is, paradoxically, not the metaphysical inadequacy of art itself to get at a deeper truth, but a change in the status of “we moderns” who find it inadequate to *ourselves* as we have come to be.

However, making *Humanus* the new “holy of holies” effectively frees art from all particular content, since what is at stake now are the lives of *individuals*, with their own passions, loves, ends, and accidental circumstances surrounding them.³⁹ This itself puts into motion the *dissolution* of modern art, which *itself* then becomes the topic of modern art, so that “it is the effect and the progress of art itself which . . . at every step along this road makes its own contribution to freeing art from the content represented.”⁴⁰ The progress of art therefore is toward increasing reflection, incorporation of theory into itself, and, in short, to greater abstraction.⁴¹ Moreover, if what it means to be human is to be free, and freedom is to be understood socially and historically, then there is no longer a metaphysical *secret* to freedom or to the world, no basic enigma, that only art can hint at or intimate; art therefore loses its power to say the unsayable or represent the unrepresentable, since what was supposedly “unrepresentable” has turned out to be conceptually comprehensible, namely, the “Kantian paradox” as involving the sociality and historicity of agency and reason. What it means to be human, Hegel says in his lectures on the philosophy of religion, has been fully revealed: its origins do not lie on some

other side of a metaphysical line drawn between mind and world; rather, it is to be a free, self-determining being, an individual “called” to lead his own life—which in turn means that since all our norms are self-legislated, they are also contestable and defeasible, which in turn means that *we* are contestable and defeasible, both individually and collectively. That this, and not the “law of the heart,” or the early modern culture of “aristocratic honor,” is what it means to be human is not the result of a transcendental argument about the conditions of agency, but is something that has emerged as a kind of practical unavoidability appearing in the historical development of humanity’s attempt to grasp the truth about itself.

Modern “romantic” drama therefore tends to a midpoint between tragedy and comedy. We moderns are tragic figures because that which we want most from an aesthetic point of view, namely, to be fully rounded “self-sufficient” characters, is impossible for us; and since comedy consists in the gap between our pretensions about what we think we are doing and what is really going on—with that gap serving to “exhibit” what is genuine and true, what is really at stake in the reality of the comedic drama—we ourselves are also comic figures, forever striving for what we implicitly know we cannot have. (In fact, as Hegel remarked in his 1820–21 version of the lectures on aesthetics, “Each such modern tragedy is also well fitted for parody.”)⁴² This means, though, that whatever meaning or significance we find in human suffering and death will have to come from our own collective efforts at *giving* them meaning, and that all such attempts are, as self-legislated, as open to challenge as any other. That, as Hegel realized, is a difficult load to bear in the modern world; and he also seemed to think that, for this reason, only a few could actually find in philosophy the kind of reconciliation with human suffering and death for which we seek, and that for most other people religion would be the preferred practice.⁴³ He also did not think that a mode of art inspired by nostalgia for the “lost mystery” of things could have much of an impact: indeed, any attempt to use art to hint symbolically at the “unrepresentable” would be fruitless.⁴⁴

The dissolution of modern art of which Hegel speaks is thus not the “end of art” in any real sense. It rather testifies to modern art’s basic problem: there can be no form of art that is appropriate to the “spirit of the times” since “spirit” has become too fragmented for any aesthetic presentation to work as presenting the “truth” to us. Each of us has a life to lead, and there are simply too many different ways to lead those lives for any aesthetic exhibition of what that means to count; in fact, perhaps the greatest modern art must be that which contains a sense of its own perspectively limited view within itself. Whereas earlier Christian art had the beauty of deep, inner feeling (Christ’s passion, Mary’s loss of her son, the

stories of the martyrs, and so on) as its subject matter, and more romantic, secular art had the depth of love or the subjective inwardness of a particular individual (as happens with many nineteenth-century novels), modern art now loses its subject matter. Anything and everything of human significance becomes a possible topic of art, and art thereby ceases to be *the* vehicle of the truth about spirit. Our problems are more political and social, that is, prosaic; we must figure out how to live together in such a fractured world, and there can be no set of cantos, no “artwork of the future,” no modernist novel that ironically reinstitutes classical mythology in the modern age, no perfect modernist architecture, and no single modern way of engaging with tonality in music that can carry forward art’s vocation to tell us what it means now to be human.

Even Hegel himself was unsure of his attempted resolutions of the problems wrapped in this conception of the role of individuality as a social achievement that carries its own tragicomic meaning on its sleeve. As he remarked in his last lectures in 1831, a few months before he died, in speaking of the political problems involved in such a view that gives so much space to individuals and contingency while trying to hold on to reason’s unconditional demands: “This collision, this node, this problem is that with which history is now occupied and whose solution it has to work out in future times.”⁴⁵

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 1:54; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 1:80. Further references to these texts will be cited in the form: A 1:54/VA 1:80 (with the English translation cited first).

2. Hegel, A 1:53–54/VA 1:80.

3. This has prompted certain Hegelians to hold that Hegel is here violating the precepts of his own system, bringing in a historical dimension that his claims to systematicity do not entitle him to. (In part, this is the old debate about whether the more historical 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* is compatible with the 1817 *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.) The best representative for a denial of the claim to historicity within the aesthetics is Richard Dien Winfield, *Stylistics: Rethinking the Artforms After Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

4. Art “only fulfills its highest vocation . . . when it is simply one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of spirit” (Hegel, A 1:7/VA 1:21). See also Hegel, A 1:9/VA 1:23.

5. “Das allgemeine und absolute Bedürfnis, aus dem die Kunst (nach ihrer formellen Seite) quillt, findet seinen Ursprung darin, dass der Mensch *denkendes*

Bewusstsein ist, d. h. dass er, was er ist und was überhaupt ist, aus sich selbst für sich macht. Die Naturdinge sind nur *unmittelbar* und *einmal*, doch der Mensch als Geist *verdoppelt* sich, indem er zunächst wie die Naturdinge ist, sodann aber ebensoehr *für sich* ist, sich anschaut, sich vorstellt, denkt und nur durch dies tätige Für-sich-sein Geist ist" (Hegel, A 1:31/VA 1:50–51).

6. As Hegel puts it, although "animals live in peace with themselves and their surroundings, the spiritual nature of man drives him to duality and inner turmoil," which in turn leads to the "deepest pain, torment, and loss of satisfaction" (Hegel, A 1:97/VA 1:135).

7. Consider, for example, the following passage from the *Aesthetics*: "On the contrary, this failure [*Fehlen*] in the subjective itself, and felt by itself, is a deficiency and a negation in the subjective which it struggles to negate again. . . . Life proceeds to negation and its grief, and it only becomes affirmative in its own eyes by obliterating the opposition and the contradiction. It is true that if it remains in mere contradiction without resolving it, then on contradiction it is wrecked" (Hegel, A 1:96–97/VA 1:134).

8. I have made this argument in Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Although he does not use this term, this idea of the "Kantian paradox" as basic to understanding post-Kantian idealism was first formulated (as far as I know) by Robert Pippin; see his "The Actualization of Freedom," in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

9. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 98 (AA 431). Translation modified: in particular, I rendered "davon er sich selbst als Urheber betrachten kann" as "which it can regard itself as instituting" instead of translating "Urheber" as "author." (More literally, it would be rendered as "instituter," but that seemed more awkward.)

10. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 100 (AA 432): "We need not now wonder, when we look back upon all the previous efforts that have been made to discover the principle of morality, why they have one and all been bound to fail. Their authors saw man as tied to laws by his duty, but it never occurred to them that he is subject only to laws which are made by himself and yet are universal and that he is bound only to act in conformity with a will which is his own but has as nature's purpose for it the function of making universal law."

11. See Robert Pippin, "Mine and Thine: The Kantian State," forthcoming in the revised edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

12. This idea that our agency takes its shape, indeed its very existence, as a norm within a space of commitments and entitlements is a controversial way of reading Hegel. The language of commitments and entitlements has been most thoroughly worked out both for Hegel interpretation and in a freestanding manner by Robert Brandom in *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), and *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); by Robert Pippin in *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfac-*

tions of *Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and by Terry Pinkard in *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and *German Philosophy, 1760–1860*.

13. In his 1825 lectures on the *Phenomenology*, Hegel points out: “At this present standpoint we have to completely forget the relationships we are used to thinking about. . . . Here, however, there is as yet no such relationship, for one aspect of the determination is that of my still being, as a free self-consciousness, an immediate and individual self-consciousness” (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Berlin Phenomenology*, trans. M. J. Petry [Dordrecht: Reidel, 1981], 77 [section 431]). In the Boumann *Zusatz* to section 432, he notes: “Um etwaigen Missverständnissen rücksichtlich des soeben geschilderten Standpunktes vorzubeugen, haben wir hier noch die Bemerkung zu machen, dass der Kampf um die Anerkennung in der angegebenen bis zum Äussersten getriebenen Form bloss im Naturzustande, wo die Menschen nur als Einzelne sind, stattfinden kann, dagegen der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft und dem Staate fernbleibt, weil daselbst dasjenige, was das Resultat jenes Kampfes ausmacht, nämlich das Anerkanntsein, bereits vorhanden ist.”

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 756–57; G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1971), 2:408, 409.

15. Hegel, A 1:111/VA 1:151. (The phrase is “das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee.”)

16. On this distinction between the normative and the nonnormative being itself normative, see Robert Brandom, “Freedom and Constraint by Norms,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* (April 1977): 187–96.

17. The reference to “dedivinized” is from Hegel, A 1:524/VA 2:137; the reference to *geistlos* is from Hegel, A 1:12/VA 1:27.

18. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 9:35 (section 250). (*Werke in zwanzig Bänden* is hereafter cited as *Werke*.)

19. Hegel, A 1:75/VA 1:106.

20. The phrase “minded” is lifted from Jonathan Lear, who uses it to characterize Wittgenstein’s thought in Lear’s “The Disappearing ‘We,’” in *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 282–300.

21. Thus Hegel notes that the origins of symbolic art begin with reflection: “Whereas wonder only occurs when man, torn free from his most immediate first connection with nature and from his most elementary, purely practical, relation to it, that of desire, stands back spiritually from nature and his own singularity and now seeks and sees in things a universal, implicit, and permanent element. In that case for the first time natural objects strike him; they are an ‘other’ which yet is meant to be for his apprehension and in which he strives to find himself over again as well as thoughts and reason” (Hegel, A 1:315/VA 1:408).

22. Hegel notes that as symbolic art tries to become more clear about what it

is that it is trying to express, it too becomes less and less artistic, since its “form” and “content” remain so indifferent to each other. To the extent that symbolic art does become clear about its content, it becomes banal, didactic, or merely descriptive. He notes that with such symbolic art, “we have on the one side the meaning, cut and dried, explicitly defined but not given outward shape, so that for artistic purposes there is nothing left but to add to it a purely external and capricious adornment” (Hegel, A 1:422/VA 1:540). In modern art that strives to be symbolic—“conceptual art” obviously comes to mind—there is either the didactic impulse (to teach us, for example, that racism is wrong, or that we are confused about gender) or the impulse simply to present something ordinary (such as a pile of bricks) whose meaning is thus obscure and depends entirely on the individual interpreting it. In both those cases there is a certain despair about the meaning of the freedom being expressed, as if the work is saying: there is nothing more to freedom than some kind of internal self-sufficiency. As Hegel puts it: “Where battle is of no avail, a reasonable man is quit of it so that he can at least withdraw into the formal self-sufficiency of subjective freedom. . . . Yet neither this abstraction of a purely formal self-sufficiency nor this futile snatching at victory is really beautiful” (Hegel, A 1:211/VA 1:275).

23. “But this immediate unity of the substantial with the individuality of inclination, impulses and will is inherent in Greek virtue, so that individuality is a law to itself, without being subjected to an independently subsisting law, judgment, and tribunal. Thus, for example, the Greek heroes appear in a prelegal era, or become themselves the founders of states, so that right and order, law and morals, proceed from them and are actualized as their own individual work which remains linked with them” (Hegel, A 1:185/VA 1:244).

24. Hegel, A 1:189/VA 1:248.

25. “The Ideal is unity within itself, a unity of its content, not merely a formal external unity but an immanent one. This substantial self-reliance [*Beruhens auf sich*] which is within itself at one with itself [*in sich einig*], we have already described above as the Ideal’s self-enjoyment, repose, and bliss. At the stage we have now reached we will bring out this characteristic as self-sufficiency [*Selbständigkeit*], and require [for artistic representation] that the general state of the world shall appear in the form of self-sufficiency so as to be able to assume the shape of the Ideal” (Hegel, A 1:179/VA 1:236).

26. “The ideal individual must be self-contained [*in sich beschlossen*]; what is objective must still be his own and it must not be separated from the individuality of men and move and complete itself independently, because otherwise the individual retreats, as something purely subordinate, from the world as it exists already independent and cut and dried” (Hegel, A 1:181/VA 1:238).

27. See Hegel, A 1:505/VA 2:112: “But for this reason, the classical gods have acquired their existent embodiment only through human representation and are there only in stone and bronze or in contemplation, but not in flesh and blood or actual spirit.”

28. “The complete emergence of this contradiction the Ideal proper only escapes because, as is the case with genuine sculpture and its separate statues in

temples, the divine individuals are portrayed as solitary, alone with themselves in blessed repose, and yet they retain an air of lifelessness, an aloofness from feeling, and that tranquil trait of mourning which we have touched on. It is this mourning which already constitutes their fate because it shows that something higher stands above them, and that a transition is necessary from their existence as particulars to their universal unity" (Hegel, A 1:503/VA 2:108–9).

29. Hegel, A 2:1198/VA 3:526.

30. See Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. Elizabeth Wyckoff, in *Sophocles I*, ed. David Grene and Richard Lattimore (New York: Modern Library, 1954), 219.

31. "Denn die klassische Schönheit hat zu ihrem Inneren die freie, selbständige Bedeutung, d. i. nicht eine Bedeutung von irgend etwas, sondern das sich selbst Bedeutende und damit auch sich selber Deutende. Dies ist das *Geistige*, welches überhaupt sich selbst zum Gegenstande seiner macht. An dieser Gegenständlichkeit seiner selbst hat es dann die Form der Äusserlichkeit, welche, als mit ihrem Inneren identisch, dadurch auch ihrerseits unmittelbar die Bedeutung ihrer selbst ist und, indem sie sich weiss, sich weist" (Hegel, A 1:427/VA 2:13).

32. Hegel, A 1:574/VA 2:196.

33. Hegel, A 1:280/VA 1:362.

34. Hegel, A 1:195/VA 1:255.

35. Hegel, A 1:193/VA 1:253.

36. Hegel, A 1:10–11/VA 1:24–25.

37. Hegel, A 1:607/VA 2:238.

38. This claim (about art as *Anschauung*, religion as *Vorstellung*, and philosophy as *Denken* and *Begriff*) is made in several places, but it appears in summation in Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, in *Werke*, 10:378 (section 572).

39. Hegel, A 1:594/VA 2:221: "Conversely, if subjective inwardness of heart becomes the essential feature to be represented, the question of which specific material of external actuality and the spiritual world is to be the embodiment of the heart is equally a matter of accident. For this reason, romantic inwardness can display itself in all circumstances, and move relentlessly from one thing to another in innumerable situations, states of affairs, relations, errors, and confusions, conflicts and satisfactions, for what is sought and is to count is only its own inner subjective formation . . . and not an objective and absolutely valid subject-matter."

40. Hegel, A 1:604/VA 2:234.

41. Hegel, A 1:605/VA 2:235: "Criticism . . . and . . . freedom of thought have mastered the artists too, and have made them, so to say, a *tabula rasa* in respect of the material and the shape of their productions, after the necessary particular stages of the romantic art-form have been traversed. . . . Art has become a free instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to any content of whatever kind. . . . No content, no form, is any longer immediately identical with the inwardness, the nature, the unconscious substantial essence of the artist; every material may be indifferent to him if only it does not contradict the formal law of being simply beautiful and capable of artistic treatment." Although Hegel does not mean by "abstract" quite what came to be meant in the twentieth-century movement of abstract art, Robert Pippin has argued that

there is a natural extension of Hegel's arguments to include it. As Pippin puts it: "The bearer of visual meaning can no longer be taken to be the sensible image just as such or even the idea, the mental state as such. The bearer of meaning is the concept of painting as such (it is *abstract*), itself a collectively constituted norm (like all norms, after Hegel) and realized as such in modernism. Abstraction in this Hegelian sense . . . [means] abstraction from dependence on sensual immediacy and so a kind of enactment of the modernist take on normativity since Kant: *self-legislation* . . . What, instead, a kind of self-authored normativity or human freedom might be is a terribly difficult question. But . . . especially in the experiments of abstraction, we now have some sense of what it *looks like* (thus both confirming and undermining Hegel's claim about the way art could now matter." See Robert B. Pippin, "What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)," *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 1 (autumn 2002), 23–24, and the version of Pippin's article in the present volume (see pp. 261–62 below).

42. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. Helmut Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 328.

43. Hegel clearly did not think that religion would vanish as only a "second-best" truth. For Hegel, religion is superseded and integrated (*aufgehoben*) into philosophy, but it is not "overcome" (*überwunden*). Thus, he says, "Religion is for everyone. It is not philosophy, which is not for everyone. Religion is the manner or mode by which all human beings become conscious of truth for themselves." This clearly distinguishes him from many of his "left-Hegelian" followers who, taking their lead from Strauss and Feuerbach, looked for the "overcoming" of religion instead of its being superseded and integrated into a philosophical understanding. This preference for "overcoming" religion also characterizes much of twentieth-century Viennese-inspired positivist philosophy and postpositivist naturalism. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–87), 1:180; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1993), 1:88.

44. "It is therefore no help to him [the artist] to adopt again, as that substance, so to say, past worldviews, i.e., to propose to root himself firmly in one of these ways of looking at things, e.g., to turn Roman Catholic as in recent times many have done for art's sake in order to give stability to their mind and to give the character of something absolute to the specifically limited character of their artistic product in itself" (Hegel, A 1:606/VA 2:236).

45. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 452; Hegel, *Werke*, 12:535.

Hegel's Architecture

David Kolb

“The first of the particular arts . . . is architecture” (VA 1:116/A 1:83).¹ For Hegel, architecture stands at several beginnings. It is the art closest to raw nature. It is also the initial art in a progressive spiritualization that will culminate in poetry and music. The drive for art is spirit’s drive to become fully itself by encountering itself; art makes spirit’s essential reality present as an outer, sensible work of its own powers (VA 1:453/A 1:351).² If Hegel’s narrative of the arts creates a hierarchy, architecture stands lowest, yet it nonetheless plays a unique and necessary role in spirit’s development. In this essay I will first describe Hegel’s views on the nature of architecture and its three stages (symbolic, classical, romantic). Then I will indicate some problems with Hegel’s narrative. Finally, I raise the question whether Hegel’s theories might be adapted to our present architectural situation.

The External Art

As “the external art [*die äusserliche Kunst*]” (VA 1:123/A 1:89) architecture works toward its spiritual goal with what is in itself unspiritual: heavy, sensible matter subject to the rule of gravity. “Architecture’s matter is the material world itself in its immediate externality as mechanical heavy masses” (VA 1:116/A 1:83). Architecture deals with matter in its most elemental mode, as occupying space, as heavy and as supporting weight. One chunk of matter is external to another. Stones and bricks have no inner guiding teleology to unite them or express itself in their being and actions.

Like all art, architecture makes of its sensible matter something whose being is no longer purely sensible (VA 1:57/A 1:36). Architecture takes up this material not as an object of desire or theory, but as an appearing of spirit (VA 1:60/A 1:38).

The vocation of architecture is to build outer nature into a surrounding shaped to a beauty coming from spirit through art. This surrounding

no longer carries its meaning in itself, but gives up its independence and finds meaning in another, in humanity's needs and the goals of family life, of the state, religion, etc. (VA 2:270/A 2:633)

Architecture shapes stones and bricks and wood into a purposive world around us, but what distinguishes architecture from the other arts is that its purposes remain external to the objects it creates. Architecture forms matter (VA 2:267/A 2:631) into an outer surrounding for spirit, a man-made environment that is especially "outer" because it will support purposes and activities and meanings that are quite literally "inside." These self-enclosed processes within the building enact forms and a unity that transcend any shape heavy matter can have.

For Hegel, meaning cannot be embodied as directly in architectural form as it can be embodied in painting or poetry. This is partly because architecture is not representational, and partly because there are so many pragmatic constraints on architectural form. More importantly, if architecture were to be permeated with self-embodied meaning as are music or poetry, something would be lost to spirit's self-awareness. Architecture's task is to deal with heavy external matter *as such*, showing it forth in its foundational role as support and surrounding for spirit's activities. If spirit is to find itself fully, not only the unity of meaning and matter but also the recalcitrance of the material world and its difference from spiritual meaning must be posited artistically.

The Three Stages of Architecture

In his aesthetics Hegel examines the individual arts with a view to their necessary features, looking at their history with a view to their essences.³ He seeks more than an insightful arrangement of historical data; he wants normative necessary relations.⁴ Philosophy always seeks content that stands firm on its own conceptual structure.⁵ His most general descriptive categories are therefore brought to art from his logic, but the particular divisions and transitions within these general structures are unique to art.

Hegel's lectures on art are arranged according to the logical sequence "universal, particular, individual." He first discusses the universal ideal of art in general. Then he discusses the ways in which that ideal particularizes itself into the three general stages of art: symbolic, classical, and romantic art. Finally he discusses the individual historical arts that actualize the general ideal.

Hegel argues that the classifications of the fine arts found in his con-

temporaries all fail because they lack a conceptually firm basis for the connections and distinctions they make among the arts. Interesting parallels and analogies are not enough; conceptual guidance is needed. This can be found by studying the different aspects and moments of the development of the notion of art itself, as it makes explicit all its conceptual aspects and movements. This will reveal a conceptual level that other discussions of art have ignored. This stage lies between the general notion of art and the individual arts, and it provides a framework for organizing the discussion of concrete artworks. This framework distinguishes three overall modes or stages of art (*Kunstformen* [VA 1:124/A 1:90]) that arise because there are three possible relations of the overall Idea of art to its concrete embodied shape (*Gestaltung* [VA 1:107/A 1:76]). These stages provide conceptual guidance for discussing the genres and works found in the history of art.⁶

Since architecture encloses and shelters meaningful activities that have their own internal dynamics and goals, Hegel organizes the three stages of architecture—symbolic, classical, romantic—around the relation of architectural form to meaningful function: symbolic architecture carries natural meanings that come before any posited separation of architectural form and function; classical architecture achieves a balanced distinction and communication between form and function; and romantic architecture expresses a meaning that goes beyond the expression of function.

Architecture's external relation to its meaning keeps it in particular alignment with the symbolic stage of art. Even though architecture does progress through all three stages, Hegel says that its basic character remains that of a symbolic art (VA 2:271/A 2:634). Likewise, Hegel says that the symbolic stage of art is best exemplified in architectural works. Oddly enough, despite these claims, in his general discussion of symbolic art most of Hegel's examples come from the pictorial or verbal arts; there Hegel does not discuss architecture except in one important subarea.⁷ However, in his treatment of architecture he does provide an extensive discussion of its symbolic stage.

Symbolic Architecture

Spirit expresses itself in ever more adequate, complex, and mediated activities. The shape of these movements is the deep content of works of art, overarching whatever particular content the artist or society chooses to work with. Artistic form expresses this doubled content; a painting may

represent a farm landscape and also embody a certain shape of spirit's reflection upon itself. A building may be both a temple of Athena and an expression of a certain way of being an individual in society. As a result, a work may lack adequate form in two ways. The more familiar case is when an individual work of art is poorly executed, so that its form is not adequate to its content. The painting is vague, or the Greek temple is badly designed. More important for classifying the arts, there are situations where the deep content is such that it cannot be adequately embodied in any form (VA 1:105, 390/A 1:74, 300). In symbolic art this happens because there the notions of spirit's activities are too indeterminate and abstract.

Determinate content is the bridge to artistic appearance (VA 1:106/A 1:75). But there is more at stake than giving a definite outline to the mountain in a painting. The deeper content must be determinate as well. Spirit's self-relation develops gradually as spirit comes to know itself. In the beginning spirit's self-awareness of its own activity remains indefinite, positing large external powers instead of examining its own activity of positing and self-reflection. When this self-reflection is not yet self-aware and self-determining, the resulting artistic form will be determined by arbitrary outside influences.

Symbolic architecture brings before us a general self-conception that remains indeterminate and abstract. Its meanings, Hegel says, are unformed, general, and elementary, mixing together all sorts of concepts and natural associations (VA 2:274/A 2:637). As art, it must give such meanings an appropriate sensible presence (VA 2:272/A 2:635), and for this symbolic architecture will use natural forms that have some resonance with the meanings it is trying to embody, but which could as well embody quite different meanings.

Hegel finds it difficult to arrange his discussion of symbolic architecture.⁸ He attributes this to the lack of differentiation in its deep meaning, and the externality inherent in the symbolic mode of signification.

If we ask for a more detailed systematic arrangement of this chapter and the chief productions belonging here, we cannot in the case of this architecture, as we can in that of the classical and romantic kinds, start from specific [architectural] forms, for instance the house; for here there cannot be cited any explicitly fixed meaning, or, therefore, any fixed mode of configuration, as a principle which then in its further development is applicable to the range of different works. (VA 2:274/A 2:636–37)

While he will argue that symbolic architecture is the earliest form of architecture, Hegel puts aside the disputes about what precise forms of building came first in history. His treatment of symbolic art does not re-

spect chronological order; his examples are temporally and spatially mixed. Later in discussing classical architecture, he will admit that some forms which he considers conceptually posterior may have originated earlier than the more conceptually basic forms. In discussing the symbolic stage he does, however, criticize some theories about the historical beginning of architecture. He insists that controversies over the relative priority of wood versus stone, or of shelters versus temples, do not reach to the true beginnings because they presuppose already differentiated social functions. Such structures exist within a field of already separate ends and means. The true beginning will be prior to that split (VA 2:268/A 2:631). The conceptually immediate beginning of architecture should be found in independent structures that have no purpose outside their own being. This is a point, Hegel says, that he has found nowhere in the literature on the subject (VA 2:269/A 2:632).

So Hegel begins his discussion with constructed things that are not quite works of art or buildings. Symbolic architecture begins with the Tower of Babel. This tower is not a building but an artificial mountain, a point of unity for a folk that is in the process of creating itself out of scattered tribes by means of this very act of building. The tower has no meaning except willed, immediate, undifferentiated social unity. It is not any particular political form or particular group, but an abstract social universal (VA 2:276/A 2:638).⁹

In his middle phase of symbolic architecture, Hegel treats objects that are intermediate between buildings and sculpture: Indian lingams and other phallic forms as affirmations of organic life, obelisks as symbols of the sun's radiance, and sphinxes and other freestanding components of Egyptian architecture. These can be grandiose and massive, and when coordinated in rows they can have stunning architectural effects (VA 2:283/A 2:644), but they still only indicate a meaning that is attached to them externally, just as the Egyptian temple walls have writing added on their surfaces.¹⁰

Hegel was fascinated by Egyptian architecture, about which Napoleon's expedition and recent explorations had provided new information. Egyptian temple complexes are, he thinks, open constructions with an inner multiplicity of freestanding items that work independently of one another. There are sculptures, columns, gates, rooms, and so on, but they are combined in an uncontrolled multiplication of one thing next to another. This adjacency and addition create amazing effects but remain an undisciplined plurality. So Egyptian temples as assemblages lack strict architectural beauty and purposiveness. This is shown by their ability to go on adding item after item; they have no inner limits imposed by a unifying definite meaning. Their forms are in the service of meanings that

remain vague and indeterminate. Naturalistic images, large abstract ideas, and unlimited addition of parts to parts make these temples impressive, but they are not yet the clear embodiment of self-defined meaning found in classical architecture.

This adding-on and lack of clear internal limits characterizes both the thinking and the construction in symbolic art.

Symbolic modes of representation correlate to abstract modes of thought where general representations, concepts, and philosophical categories are all mixed together, treated (by the understanding, not reason) as separable and combinable in many permutations, without any necessary links or subordinations or developments. . . . The meanings taken as content here, as in symbolic art generally, are as it were vague and general representations, elemental, variously confused and sundered abstractions of the life of nature, intermingled with thoughts of the actuality of spirit, without being ideally collected together as moments within a single subjectivity. (VA 2:274/A 2:637)

In its last stages symbolic architecture does build enclosures, though still serving a meaning that can only be indicated rather than fully embodied. In his final division of symbolic architecture Hegel treats caves, such as Ellora in India, and then Egyptian pyramids that enclose the place of the absent dead. With the pyramids and similar structures we see architecture beginning to subordinate itself to a purpose it encloses, rather than standing independently as a complete symbol on its own.

It is striking that enclosed spaces as such have not entered Hegel's discussion until this third substage of symbolic architecture, which is described as a transition to the classical. Hegel insists that architecture is not born as a built enclosure; the Tower of Babel is a solid sign establishing a pole for spiritual unity. Hollow buildings and enclosed spaces are conceptually posterior, coming about when spiritual unity frees itself from the immediate unity with nature symbolized in early architectural erections. Hegel is disagreeing with contemporary discussions in France about "the primitive hut" as the beginning of architecture. For the Abbé Laugier, the great theorist of the primitive hut, the primal architectural act involves erection, support, and enclosure. For Hegel the primal act is marking and assembling.¹¹ Hegel argues that the cave or hole comes conceptually before the hut (VA 2:288/A 2:649). Caves do not explicitly embody an act of support. Extending a natural cave into a subterranean room unites into one seamless action the functions of extending, surrounding, supporting, and the creation of limits, producing one undivided surface that plays all these roles at once. Only in classical architecture will these various func-

tions be differentiated and expressed by their own separated architectural elements. So, for instance, the act of supporting a roof and resisting gravity does not become presented as such until the freestanding Egyptian column loses its independence and naturalistic imagery, and becomes the classical column that presents its own act of support.¹²

The Transition to Classical Architecture

Classical (i.e., ancient Greek) architecture develops out of symbolic architecture when the organic forms of nature are measured by their appropriateness to definite purposes, even as those purposes become more artistic through their combination with those natural forms in more limited and individuated meanings. At the stage of symbolic architecture

self-consciousness . . . is not yet ready by itself, but is working, seeking, yearning, producing more and more, without final satisfaction and so without rest. For the spirit that is ready for itself finds satisfaction in a form that is appropriate to spirit, and puts bounds to its production of forms. Symbolic artworks, however, remain more or less without boundaries. (VA 2:286/A 2:646)

Symbolic architecture “means” through add-on assemblages that embody powerful but indefinite ideas and that lack a strong organizing form that can both differentiate and unify the whole. Classical architecture works within more determined self-conceptions of spirit and so can achieve deeper unity in a balanced distinction of form and meanings.

Classical architecture brings function and beauty into harmonious unity. It is important to note, however, that unlike many theorists Hegel does not see architecture as developing from a primitive stage of mere function into an advanced stage of architectural beauty. Such a development is familiar from the textbook division between a building and a piece of architecture: a bicycle shed is a building, but a church is architecture, because it adds decoration and symbolizes its function. Hegel does think churches are more significant, but he does not think that there are any nonarchitectural or prearchitectural buildings that have only function. Architecture does not start with functional buildings that get decorated and refined into beauty. At the beginning *neither* function *nor* beauty is explicitly present. Symbolic architecture is prefunction as well as prebeauty. Both function and beauty are submerged in an immediate unity with natural meaning and activity. When function and beauty do become

explicit in architecture, it is because a distinction has been introduced where none was before, and in that distinction both function and beauty appear as such for the first time. Beauty and function appear together, whether in opposition or harmony.

Classical Architecture

Only in classical architecture are beauty and function clearly distinguished, even as they come together harmoniously. This means that only classical architecture is “beautiful.” Symbolic architecture is impressive, overwhelming, exciting, inspiring, but does not have the inner division and consequent balanced perfection that allows beauty to emerge. Later, romantic architecture will transcend beauty. It is classical architecture’s equilibrium of form and content that allows for that balanced bodying-forth that is architectural beauty.

Classical Greek temples enclose sculptures of definite individualized gods. For Hegel, the idealized human form is the outer shape most appropriate to classical self-awareness. Greek sculptures of gods are not symbolic art’s personified natural forces; they are individual subjectivities. They do not belong to immediate nature, and so they need a place designed with imagination rather than immediate natural forms (VA 2:297/A 2:655). In surrounding these images with an ordered structure, classical architecture shows what architecture should be (*its begriffsmässige Stellung*). The Greek temple does not try to embody some indefinite whole of meaning, but assumes the role of housing and supporting the image of the god, and the self-conscious activity of the community; this is a free-standing, self-active meaning that goes beyond the architectural form.

Because it expresses an individualized definite meaning, a classical building can be more internally differentiated. The functions fulfilled in symbolic architecture remain globally identical with the whole structure or with one or another of its loosely agglomerated parts. Neither the function nor the structure is articulated into rational divisions. Only with classical architecture will functional roles be posited as separate and assigned to separated units of the architectural form.¹³ Hegel says that “the differences [of function] . . . must come into appearance *as* differences” (VA 2:318/A 2:674). On the other hand, it is equally necessary to unite these expressed differences of function into a harmonious whole. In that whole, the architectural forms (for instance, the divisions of the column, the parts of the architrave, the roof profile) take their necessity from conceptual divisions posited by and within the overall function of supportive enclosure.

Classical architecture asserts the building’s own act of standing and

enclosing. The distinctions between parts of a classical Greek temple correspond to distinctions of function: bearing loads (columns as *die materielle Anschauung des Tragens* [VA 2:314/A 2:670]), being borne (architrave), enclosing (walls, colonnades), and so on. Similarly, the classical orders are connected not to anthropomorphic imagery but to particular aspects of the notion of a building that supports securely (Doric) and gracefully (Ionic) and receives ornament (Corinthian) (VA 2:323–26/A 2:676–80).

Hegel's most developed example is the classical Greek column. A plain post can support a roof just as well as can an articulated, fluted column, but the column posits and displays this function of support in a way that the post does not. The articulations of the column display conceptual distinctions within the act of support: the base shows rising from the ground, the capital shows ending and spreading to support, the fluting and entasis of the shaft show roundness and rising, and the overall proportions show that the column results from imagination and thought rather than natural contingency.

Classical architecture thus explicitly celebrates and also overcomes the heaviness and gravity of external matter. Natural forms are transformed according to conceptual necessities that go beyond the pragmatics of construction. This transformation shows in the adaptation of wooden structural features into stone buildings. Hegel acknowledges that the historical origin of many of the features of classical temples lies in the details of earlier wooden construction. But their historical origin does not explain the rational meaning that goes beyond their wooden past. That, for instance, the capitals of columns might originate in tree branchings is at best secondary and at worst excessive in relation to the "true" deduction of the parts from the basic ideas of supporting and enclosing. Hegel says that art in general has a right, but architecture in particular has a duty, to go against the immediate forms of nature (VA 2:301/A 2:659).

It is crucial for classical beauty that construction bring rational necessity. Nothing should appear arbitrary or contingent. Proportions are carefully calculated; forms are disciplined and abstracted. In discussing the difference between posts and columns, Hegel remarks that for an undifferentiated straight post,

its specific length, its beginning and end seem as it were to be a negative limitation imposed by something else, or to be determined accidentally in a way that does not emerge from the post itself.

Whereas for a shaped column

beginning and ending are determinations implicit in the very nature of a column as support and on this account *must* come into appearance on it as constituent features of its own. (VA 2:310/A 2:666, my emphasis)

A column should be an explicit self-referential performance of the column's function. Therefore, although excessively thin or thick columns may be perfectly able to support a roof, such columns fail to present properly their own action of support, and should be avoided.¹⁴

Even though the classical devices are not strictly needed for the function they perform, in that performance they allow the column to achieve self-showing beauty. Need and fitness to function alone cannot decide beauty (VA 2:314/A 2:670). Art makes its own demands. In classical architecture, beauty lies in the self-showing of function separated from immediate organic form. This is brought together into a closed totality whose music of proportions lifts the needed functionality into beauty. Hegel elaborates on the characterization of architecture as "frozen music [*gefrorene Musik*]" (VA 2:305/A 2:662): both music and architecture achieve a mathematical harmony of relations that are in their basics easily graspable but in their accomplishment never reducible to exact numbers and masses.¹⁵

Classical beauty posits the conceptual divisions of function, and only that. Anything else is excess. In the classical Hegel is most firm in his judgments about architectural form. There should be no excess beyond the proper determinations, so Hegel feels justified in criticizing deviations from the essential tasks and forms of classical architecture. For example, quoting Goethe, half-columns are "unthings," since it is the nature of a column to be freestanding (VA 2:316–17/A 2:672–73). Half-columns are offensive because they mix two opposed functions that have no inner necessity for being together. A true column should be round and complete in itself as it gives visible expression to the act of support. Hegel grants that half-columns may be very ancient, and may even predate freestanding columns, but they are still unacceptable mixed forms. Similarly, caryatids may use human figures as columns, but this is "a purely superfluous use of these figures, because their real purpose is not to carry a load" (VA 2:299/A 2:637).¹⁶

Such norms are most effective in classical architecture where differentiated functions are explicitly posited. In symbolic architecture form is not controlled because there is no rationally articulated content to provide a measure; symbolic architecture is all excess. In romantic architecture the detail of decoration and other particularizations will not be defined by the overarching unity of the building. Pillar heights in symbolic and romantic architecture are under no constraints comparable to the classical orders—in symbolic architecture there is no measure, and in romantic architecture the pillars are part of a structure whose overall showing does not depend on clearly demarcated functions, so the ratio of height to width of a Gothic pillar can become, as Hegel says, visually incalculable.

In classical architecture, then, the temple shows forth its own performative essence. This should not be confused with the temple's "program." Hegel insists that programmatic function cannot be the final determinant of the form of the building. The temple's programmatic function is to house the gods and provide a point of assembly for the community. It could fill these functions in many ways. The temple should also look like something that is housing the gods, but this too could be done in many ways. What is needed for a classical temple is that its parts each show forth their own notionally determined role or action. A column should show forth load-bearing, a roof should show forth being borne and not itself bearing. In this self-reference, the building reveals its own inner activities of standing and surrounding.

This self-showing of architectural function is posited explicitly only in classical architecture. It is missing in symbolic architecture, whose underlying categories are too undifferentiated to provide notional control of its building parts, so its forms become fantastical and multiple. On the other hand, romantic architecture includes articulated notional control but leaves the particular parts freer than the classical. Hegel finds notional necessity in the cruciform plan of a Gothic church, and in its spires, but he leaves without notional guidance the different kinds of vaulting and pillars that replace the classical orders. The romantic does not lack resources to make inner distinctions, but it no longer measures its performance by the natural functions that predominate in classical architecture.

Architecture also shows forth a people's basic categories and general representations, their vision of human life and cosmic form. This too is more than the program of the building, and also more than the self-showing of classical function. The classical temple keeps the rain off the statues and provides a place of assembly; it also shows forth its support and load and enclosure. In addition, it makes a harmonious and adequate expression of differentiated inner individuality in differentiated outer form, and this enacts the classical ideal of life in a harmoniously formed cosmos.¹⁷

Romantic Architecture

Hegel's third stage, romantic architecture, moves beyond classical harmony. Hegel applies the term "romantic" to art that comes after the Roman Empire, not just to the self-designated "Romantic" art of the early nineteenth century. His use of the term is in keeping with its original meaning as designating works written in the "Romance" languages descended from Latin. However, his analysis of this art does relate to the

Romantic movement that he knew well in Jena. Romantic art expresses a turning inward, a celebration of interiority that transcends while affirming the exterior details of life. This produces a new relation of art and artist, a new art and a new experience of nature, all shaped by the greater inner independence and self-sufficiency of postclassical subjectivity.

Romantic architecture is typified, for Hegel, by Gothic cathedrals. In a letter to his wife describing his impressions of the Cologne cathedral, whose construction had recently recommenced, Hegel wrote:

I searched out the Cathedral right away. The majesty and gracefulness of it, or of what exists of it, the slender proportions, the elongation in them, which do not so much give the impression of a rise as of upward flight, are worth seeing and are wholly admirable as the conception of a single human being and the enterprise of a single city. In the Cathedral one vividly beholds in every sense a different dimension, a human world of a quite different sort, as also of another time. There is no question here of utility, enjoyment, pleasure, or satisfied need, but only a spacious ambling about enveloped by high halls that exist for themselves, and, as it were, simply do not care whether people use them for whatever purpose. An empty opera house, like an empty church, has something lacking in it. We encounter here a tall forest, though admittedly a spiritual forest full of art, standing for itself, existing there regardless of whether people crawl around down below or not. It could not care less. What it is, it is for itself. It is made for itself, and whatever ambles or parades about within its walls—or tours about in it with a green oilcloth knapsack and an admittedly still unlit pipe in the mouth—is, along with the caretaker, simply lost in it. All this—standing and walking around in it—simply vanishes in it.¹⁸

The cathedral has “room for a whole folk” (VA 2:340/A 2:692), and their activities take place inside the great space, not outside around the building as with classical temples, whose inside spaces were small and restricted. The limited functions of the interior of the classical temple change to the open independent space of a church that is generously indifferent to what goes on inside it. Many different things can be going on at the same time as the people, in nomadic fashion, wander through the vast receptive space that nothing can fill because it transcends them all. This space embodies and expresses spirit’s new self-conception, which is a self-awareness of its own self-recollective motion beyond any finite function. The classical temple gathers the surrounding people and their landscape around its central point, while the Gothic cathedral opens onto a new interior landscape.¹⁹

This new architecture goes beyond the classical harmony of structural elements and differentiated functional tasks. It creates a new totality that overreaches the explicit internal divisions of classical function. The romantic building “has and displays a definite purpose; but in its grandeur and sublime peace it is lifted above anything purely utilitarian into an infinity in itself” (VA 2:331/A 2:685). Such buildings are

entirely suitable for [their functional goals], but their real character lies precisely in the fact that they transcend any specific end and, as perfect in themselves, stand there on their own account. Therefore no simple relation of the understanding determines the character of the whole.
(VA 2:331/A 2:684)

Romantic architecture unites the independent meaning of the symbolic with the serviceable subordination of the classical. It does not mix these indiscriminately; the romantic building serves but reaches beyond service, as its motion goes beyond any limited god-figure within. The classical is the realm of organic totality, where parts have a precise function in terms of the self-referential showing of the whole. The romantic expresses a unity that includes but goes beyond such functional divisions to embrace both the particularity of its individual parts (the statues, the arches, the decorations) and the life of a substantial whole which moves beyond them. This is a spirit whose turn inward is also a rising to the universal. Hegel says that the unity of such buildings escapes the standard concepts of part and whole, or means and end (VA 2:331/A 2:685). The calculable proportions of the classical give way to a whole beyond measure that expresses spatially the gathering into itself of a subjectivity that overcomes the division of inner and outer. This goes beyond all classical considerations of function and means, because spirit's process of self-recollection becomes its own end.

The Gothic cathedral is closed in upon its own interiority and open to an inner, infinite motion of self-recollection that transcends finite subjectivity. This differs from the classical temple that stands open to the finite surroundings while serving images of well-defined individual gods. As a consequence, the mediating architectural spaces and broad outlooks of the classical temple disappear. Columns move inside and become pillars. The colonnade of the classical temple opens outward toward the natural and social world, but the windows of the Gothic church rise up to the indeterminate openness of the sky and a light other than the Greek sun.²⁰

Instead of restfully bearing weight, the romantic building rises upward. Instead of the classical roof that bespeaks the labor of being supported by columns, the romantic building reaches for the sky with its

spires and towers. Inside, what were classical columns now have a new vocation. Columns become pillars, rising upward freely, bearing a load without visible effort within a movement that cannot be defined by the task of resisting gravity (VA 2:336/A 2:689). Their movement no longer carries one down to the supportive earth; one's glance is carried upward into the pointed arches and tracery. With this come other changes: capitals are reduced, and the ratio of base to height is no longer subject to visible proportion.

The romantic harks back to the symbolic because it reintroduces explicit natural forms into architecture. A cathedral is more forest than fortress, a natural growth rather than a mechanical means-end combination. Its tracery resembles a canopy of trees (VA 2:335/A 2:688). Hegel is skeptical, however, about the supposed deeper meanings some contemporaries found in this nature symbolism or in the mathematical ratios of different parts of the structure. He disparages speculation about mystical correspondences and magic numbers. These do not provide anything deeper or more beautiful, and they overlook the clearly laid out depths (*klar . . . dargestellte Tiefe*) found in the plan and overall structure (VA 2:339/A 2:691).²¹

Unlike the classical temple where outside articulations guide the placement of the plainer interior rooms, the Gothic cathedral's complex interior dominates its exterior surface, whose windows and divisions show the internal pillars and side walkways and balconies. But the outside also asserts itself too, in spires (VA 2:343/A 2:694) and in the towers that concentrate the mass of the building into an incalculable height.

This architecture finds the inner in heavy, massive matter. The Gothic dematerializes mass and turns the stubborn inertness of matter into ubiquitous decoration. Everything is broken into parts, into an incomprehensible infinity of particular shapes and forms that yet are held within an overall unity (VA 2:344/A 2:695).

[In the Gothic cathedral] the substance of the whole is dismembered and shattered into the endless divisions of a world of individual variegations, but this incalculable multiplicity is divided in a simple way, articulated regularly, dispersed symmetrically, both moved and firmly set in the most satisfying eurhythmy, and this length and breadth of varied details is gripped together unhindered into the most secure unity and clearest independence. (VA 2:331/A 2:685)

Hegel describes romantic architecture as accomplishing a complex task with grace and transcendence. If the classical surrounds a usable interior

and expresses that function with an articulation and harmony that symbolic architecture cannot achieve, the romantic does all this and more. It is not indifferent to function but overreaches it in a movement of recollection and inward transcendence. If the classical posits the essential divisions in its own concept in a way that the symbolic never could (because it had no unified concept), the romantic also posits its internal divisions, yet it affirms an intenser unity than the classical.

But if this is so, why does Hegel say that it is the classical that is the most authentic and proper stage of architecture? Hegel would admit that romantic architecture's deeper unity is more dialectically complete than is classical balance, which he describes as abstract and dry. But he would insist that the Ideal of art implies a perfect equilibrium between a self-articulated inner meaning and a proportioned outer form, which is best achieved in classical architecture. The symbolic lacks articulated meaning and the romantic weakens the harmony because the inner has begun to predominate. The classical does best among architectural forms what all art is to do, and the classical building best balances inner meaning with the distinctive marks of architecture, the externality of meaning and the act of juxtaposing unorganic materials. Hegel also asserts that architecture finds its proper concept at the classical stage precisely because at that stage architecture is *not* able to bring the spiritual to a fully appropriate external existence. Romantic architecture is trying to be more than architecture; the classical puts spiritless matter into service of the spirit within, without denying the externality and heaviness of matter (VA 2:303/A 2:660).

But then, we might reply, since architecture always involves externality of purpose and juxtaposed elements, and since architecture can never embody the differentiated innerness of spirit—which is why architecture remains low on the hierarchy of the arts—then should not the *symbolic* be the most authentic stage of architecture? Hegel would agree that architecture remains overall a symbolic art, and that symbolic architecture shows best the properly architectural mode of signification, tied to an external meaning. But symbolic architecture does not yet contain the necessary individuated and self-articulated totality of meaning found in the classical worldview.

Still, it remains striking that it is the middle of the three stages of architecture that is the most perfect. There is something about architecture that Hegel finds inappropriate for the third position of dialectical synthesis. Art of any kind can never be a full dialectical completion, since such completion involves a process of self-consciousness that for Hegel cannot be captured in art's external expressions.²²

Questions About Hegel's Narrative

There are puzzling aspects to each of Hegel's three stages of architecture. The symbolic is something of a catchall category and encloses too much architectural history under too few rubrics. It is also curious that while architecture is the symbolic art par excellence, it is in symbolic *verbal* art that Hegel finds an explicitly posited externality of image to meaning. There is no stage of symbolic architecture that expresses the externality of architectural meaning as such.²³

There are also problems with Hegel's notion of the classical. Hegel maintains its purity only by a too-rigorous exclusion of naturalistic and other "excesses" of meaning. Are the Greek temple forms really so purely dominated by self-showing functions? Naturalistic meaning may not be quite so transformed as Hegel would like, and Greek columns not so far from the naturalistic imagery dominating the shape of Egyptian building parts.²⁴ And is the Egyptian temple really as unclassical as Hegel says? To maintain the purity of the Greek, Hegel stresses the lack of organic unity in the Egyptian temple compound. It is important for him that those temples not be true surroundings or housings for the god within, so he exaggerates their structural openness. A more accurate parallel to the Egyptian temple compound is not the individual Greek temple but the Greek acropolis with its assemblage of buildings of various types, its outside altars, freestanding statues, and twisty processional ways. If this is compared to the Egyptian temple compound, their differences are less decisive.

Romantic architecture is puzzling for other reasons. It covers a long history but culminates in the medieval Gothic. In his treatments of painting and verbal art, Hegel insists on the difference between medieval art and modern secular art. But in his treatment of architecture there is no movement beyond the medieval, except for a brief and unsatisfactory reference to modern gardens. Much is left out: the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Neoclassical, and the proto-modern. Where is the secular world? In discussing the other arts, especially painting and fiction, Hegel does deal with the secular life of the modern bourgeois. But there is no architectural parallel to his discussion of novels or of Dutch painting. What is odd, of course, is that such architecture was all around him as he wrote.

A partial excuse for Hegel's seeming blindness might be his deliberate focus on building types that are central monuments rather than everyday buildings. This fits his aiming at the central self-consciousness of a people. He says that vernacular architecture is under too many pragmatic constraints to fully express basic self-conceptions. It cannot have true beauty but only decoration. However, this argument with which Hegel excludes earlier domestic and industrial architecture fails when

applied to modern bourgeois life. There it is precisely the day-to-day world and economic life that houses our central self-expression. We may build central monuments, but we no longer live in an age centered on heroic kings or temples. In the world of Hegel's rational state, where the king is a functionary, where one finds one's place by maturing into a secular role in the economy, cathedrals may still celebrate a religious self-consciousness of the whole, but spirit's concrete existence is no longer dependent on central displays; it will be found in ordinary buildings. Hegel is aware of this when he treats secular Dutch paintings, or modern novels, or Goethe's poetry—why not with architecture? I discuss in the next section what might happen to his ideas if we revised the treatment of architecture in line with the treatment of other secular arts.

There are other historical gaps in Hegel's discussion of architecture. Compared to his treatment of philosophy and literature, he gives a minimal treatment of non-Western architecture. This seems due to a restricted diet of examples joined to an overall vision of all non-Western civilizations as expressing undifferentiated conceptual unities.

Within the West Hegel seriously downplays Roman architecture, which is for him a transitional form. The Romans added new building types and improved private architecture, but they lacked the Greek sense of fitness for purpose and artistic refinement (VA 2:329/A 2:682). Usefulness was their major concern, with beauty only as surface decoration. Even that key Roman architectural form, the arch, is for Hegel a transition away from the Greek beam toward the Gothic pointed arch. But at least Hegel mentions Roman architecture. He ignores the Renaissance and the Baroque, and French architecture in general. Perhaps he might argue that the Renaissance offers nothing new, since his theory is not equipped to deal with "neo" architectural styles; revivals do not fit well into his narrative.²⁵

Finally, we should note again how Hegel ignores contemporary architecture, even as he is celebrating contemporary writers and some contemporary composers. Schinkel's dramatic buildings were refashioning the center of Berlin as Hegel wrote, but aside from a few mentions of Schinkel's new museum in a letter and lecture, Hegel ignores both the Neoclassical buildings and Schinkel's proto-modern office buildings for government ministries.

It is tempting to excuse Hegel by citing his lack of experience and his dependence on secondary sources.²⁶ He had not studied architecture directly and his travels never took him to Italy or Greece, so he had little direct experience of ancient and Renaissance architecture. For descriptions of buildings he was not personally familiar with, Hegel often relied on the work of his Berlin colleague Alois Hirt, whom he cites more than

any other author on architecture, especially Hirt's *The History of Ancient Architecture* (*Die Geschichte der Baukunst bei den Alten*) (1821–27).²⁷ Hirt's volumes describe the ancient lands, then their buildings, divided according to peoples and ages, with many long citations from ancient authorities such as Herodotus and Strabo.²⁸ Hegel follows Hirt very closely in some descriptions, for instance in his discussion of the Tower of Belus.

But reliance on Hirt is not a sufficient explanation of Hegel's choices about what to include and what to omit. For instance, Hirt starts his narrative with Egyptian temples, and begins his discussion of Greek architecture with forts and monuments, whereas Hegel develops quite different beginnings for his own discussion of symbolic and classical architecture. Also, Hirt ranges far more widely than Hegel, including chapters on Phoenician and Israelite architecture, Greek dwelling houses, and Hellenistic buildings, plus almost 300 pages on Roman architecture. So Hegel's avoidance of such topics must be seen as intentional. And there is no doubt that Hegel did experience contemporary styles in Berlin and Paris and Vienna, so it is difficult to find a suitable rationale for their exclusion.

Hegel's Concepts and Today's Architecture

In this final section I examine how Hegel's theory of architecture might be modified to deal with the situation of architecture in our contemporary world, and then I discuss some features of today's architecture that pose difficulties even for those updated Hegelian concepts.

Suppose that we wanted to fill the gap in Hegel's theory concerning contemporary architecture, his own and by extension ours as well. We might be tempted to look for a central building type. For Hegel, classical architecture and romantic architecture are each organized around a basic type: the classical house enclosure become a temple, and the Gothic cathedral rising from within. What building type now expresses the contemporary shape of spirit? Where are our modern bourgeois cathedrals?²⁹

If we must pick a central building type, it might be a modernist office building such as Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building or Norman Foster's Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank.³⁰ More recently civic cultural centers and museums have taken on important symbolic roles, such as I. M. Pei's Louvre pyramid, Richard Meier's Getty acropolis, and Frank Gehry's Bilbao museum, with their cousins in hundreds of cities.³¹

But should we be looking for a central building type? Symbolic architecture did not present one basic type; could that be true again today?

It might seem that for Hegel this would be a regression, since spirit has now come to itself, and it needs some architectural expression for that coming together. But is that necessarily so?

Romantic art, Hegel says, ushers in the age of prose, when spirit is turned toward its own secular creativity. The age of the classical hero is over. Prose is varied and does not culminate in a central drama. Yet for Hegel the prosaic age of bourgeois and bureaucrats expresses a deeper inwardness than the classical heroes ever achieved. So we might argue that we do not need a central *architectural* expression of spirit's unity. Hegel said that in the romantic age, spirit is not found in a perfect statue in a central temple but is the very movement between the finite and the infinite (*Gott als dieser Wechsel* [VA 1:119/A 1:86]).³² Spirit's movement works itself out in the prose of the modern state and economy, and in a philosophy that goes beyond embodied symbols. The self-consciously prosaic spirit should find itself in a spread of everyday buildings.

Romantic painting and literature, for Hegel, find spirit's depth in the details of ordinary secular life. They no longer need grand mythological or religious content. Yet Hegel does not describe romantic architecture as prosaic, except for brief remarks on gardens and on Gothic city halls; he keeps the Gothic cathedral as a central focus. In our revision of his theory, we might apply to architecture that concentration on the ordinary that Hegel attributes to romantic painting and literature.

Hegel could be read as taking a step in this direction even in his treatment of classical art. Speaking of the walls and colonnades of Greek temples, he says that

in these prostyles and amphi-prostyles, these single and double colonnades, which led directly to the free open air, we see people wandering openly and freely, individually or in accidental groupings; for the colonnades as such enclose nothing but are the boundaries of open thoroughfares, so that people walking in them are half indoors and half outside and at least can always step directly into the free open air. In the same way the long walls behind the columns do not admit of any crowding to a central point to which the eye could turn when the passages were full; on the contrary, the eye is more likely to be turned away from such a central point, in every direction. Instead of having an idea of a gathering together with a goal, we see a direction outwards, and get the idea of people staying there cheerfully, without serious purpose, idle, and just chatting. (VA 2:320/A 2:675)

Here Hegel describes a relaxed, loquacious, uneconomical passing of communal time, enabled by an architecture that is turned outward rather

than toward an inner focus. Hegel's Greek temple is acting somewhat like Heidegger's, opening a world. Such a dwelling resembles the symbolic in not expressing a clearly defined central meaning, but it also resembles the romantic: like the Cologne cathedral, it offers a space not dominated by function, not even by the self-showing constructional function of classical architecture. Yet unlike the romantic, it does not turn inward or upward in a motion beyond the agora.³³

In such a world the architect need not be restricted to central styles and monuments. Architects could act as Hegel describes modern painters working with a historical repertoire of themes and styles.

The artist's attitude to his topic is on the whole much the same as the dramatist's who brings on the scene and delineates different characters who are strangers to him. . . . For this purpose he needs his supply of pictures, modes of configuration, earlier forms of art which, taken in themselves, are indifferent to him and only become important if they seem to him to be those most suitable for precisely this or that material. . . . However much he puts his heart into the given topic, that topic yet always remains to him a material which is not in itself directly the substance of his own consciousness. (VA 2:235–36/A 1:605–6)

The artist's relation to historical particulars would resemble the Gothic cathedral's relation to its riotous mass of detailed decoration. Just as no single statue captures the movement expressed by the cathedral as a whole, so the motion of the modern spirit gathering into a self-awareness of its own motion cannot be captured in a single historical style. Our community is beyond any one representation of itself, and can refuse grand central symbols. So there need be no single style or centralizing architectural monument for our fully prosaic world.

What I have just described draws from Hegel's account of the other romantic arts to update his discussion of romantic architecture. But there are aspects of architecture today that resist this prosaic Hegelian treatment.

The first difficulty is our denial of materiality. Hegel wanted architecture to show heavy masses subject to the law of gravity (VA 1:120/A 1:87). But our world is dispensing with the show of heaviness, and lessening the effect Hegel considered it necessary for architecture to express. New materials and complex mathematical manipulations create buildings that do not appear tied to gravity and weight. Some are inflated membranes held up by the air within them; some are supported by tension members rather than compression; some, such as recent Frank Gehry buildings, emphasize their materiality as spread and twist but not as heavy.

Such buildings neither visibly support weight, as in the Greek temple, nor rise beyond it, as in the Gothic cathedral.

Someday, "buildings" in outer space habitats will not have to support weight at all. Generations might grow up where matter would be experienced as opaque and impermeable (to keep in the air and to separate interior spaces) but not as weighty or demanding support. Structural loads would be distributed differently, holding the structure together around one or more centers rather than holding it above a ground plane. If all or parts of the structure have to rotate in order to provide a healthful effect of weight, its structural loads will be holding the floor in rather than holding the roof up.

An even deeper dematerialization is coming sooner than space habitats. We already see the beginnings of an architecture of pure image. Buildings become screens for giant displays. And in theme parks and other emphatic environments, constructional and functional expression becomes completely subordinated to image and meaning. This dematerialization will increase with virtual reality. In a virtual world, the resistance of materiality becomes a planned effect. Not only the architecture but also the physics can be designed at will—frozen music indeed.

Whether in a virtual world or in Times Square and Disney World, the materiality of architecture disappears into meaning and intention. Hegel might say that such dematerialized buildings are no longer architecture but sculpture. But we might reply with his own claim, cited earlier, that while art in general has a *right* to go against natural form, architecture has the *duty* to do so, now even against the form of materiality itself (VA 2:301/A 2:659). Would Hegel then see this as the final triumph of spirit and romantic subjectivity over heavy matter? Perhaps, but he might better object that such dematerialization deprives spirit of one of its constitutive relationships. Blunt matter offers a kind of otherness that needs to be expressed, not transformed into more intimate relations. Spirit and subjectivity should be dialectical, not simply dominant, in relation to nature and otherness.³⁴ Architecture shows that side of the world that cannot be fully incorporated into spirit's meaning-giving activity. To deny that resistance would be to diminish spirit's awareness of its own nature and action.

The second difficulty with contemporary architecture, from a Hegelian point of view, is that as materiality becomes pliable and light, meaning becomes opaque and resistant. Aggressively arbitrary and anti-necessary works have appeared in architecture as in the other arts. Peter Eisenman's designs often offer too much or too little meaning. In Rem Koolhaas's "big" constructions, parts insist on themselves without fitting into a harmonious totality. The open assemblages of symbolic architecture return with a vengeance. At the other extreme, buildings by Tadao

Ando or by Herzog and de Meuron strive for a closedness that resists incorporation into narratives or reflections. They too resemble symbolic art, except that their resistance is more self-aware.

These two difficulties with contemporary architecture might seem to complement each other to Hegel's advantage. Could the non-self-transparency of meaning replace the lost heaviness of opaque materiality? Perhaps, but it would change the bearing of other Hegelian concepts. For Hegel, the enigmatic Egyptian temple assemblages are overcome when the Greek temple closes around a statue that presents individualized subjectivity as absolute. In romantic architecture, we know the subject as self-present meaning-activity.³⁵ To use current jargon, such subjectivity resembles a transcendental signified beyond the maze of interrelating symbols. Much of current art and architecture strives to avoid such reference. If Hegelian concepts could be used at all in this artistic situation, they would need to emphasize the motion of spirit rather than any subjective center. The crucial issue then would become the self-coincidence of that motion as it comes to itself in art. Could that too have become prosaic and spread into the multiple and everyday, rather than being gathered at a central pinnacle? If so, our architecture could be described as showing the lack of coherence, the manyness and opacity of symbolic art, along with the self-aware movements of romantic art, yet without any classical final embodiment or romantic pure self-presence. At this point, would such concepts still be Hegelian? Perhaps they would have been stretched beyond his limits. Or perhaps they could be taken as another example of his notion of the end of art, of a self-awareness that cannot have a final artistic locus. Then the debate about the adequacy of Hegel's ideas for our situation would turn to his concept of philosophy as the final coming together of spirit in and for itself, which is a topic that exceeds the architecture of this essay.

Notes

1. Abbreviated citations in the text and notes refer to G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970); G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). These two texts are cited in the following form: VA 1:50/A 1:31 (with the German text cited first). I have occasionally modified the translations.

2. Hegel's "metaphysical" principles about the nature of spirit's process and being's self-coincidence are briefly invoked from his logic. Spirit must show itself for itself as actively thinking (Hegel, VA 1:50/A 1:31; see also VA 1:411/A 1:317), so the work of art must show itself as the product of spirit's activity. Hegel demands

that art possess a substantive content (Hegel, VA 1:410/A 1:316). But architecture is not a representational art. Its content is its doing: its functioning embodies and enacts rather than denotes or imitates spirit's being in the world and its quest for its self. In the final analysis, Hegel would not claim that "representation" is the main function of any form of art.

3. In Hegel's treatment of art, many different notional and historical developments are going on at once: the gradual realization of the concept of art and its Ideal, the development of each of the three stages of art, the growth of the actual arts as they appear over time, and the evolution within each art and within each stage of that art. These sequences do not always proceed neatly in step, nor do they follow the same logical transitions. When treating architecture, Hegel explicitly denies that the conceptual order of his distinctions and developments coincides with the exact historical order in which various building forms developed. On the other hand, he does see a general historical progression from abstract beginnings in symbolic art that parallels the logical development of the concept of art.

4. In a letter to his friend and patron Niethammer discussing the curriculum in Hegel's school, Hegel says: "It would be most useful if the gymnasium students received, besides a better concept of versification, more definite concepts of the nature of epic, tragedy, comedy, and the like. On the one hand, aesthetics could offer better, more recent views on the nature and ends of art; on the other hand, it must of course not remain mere idle talk about art" (Hegel to Niethammer, Nuremberg, October 23, 1812, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984], 278).

5. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel says that he is concerned to examine the categories of thought in terms of "the sole question to which philosophic interest demands an answer, namely, which of the . . . principles possesses truth in and for itself"; G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. Georg Lasson (Hamburg: Meiner, 1963), 389; G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities, 1969), 739. In his aesthetics Hegel will derive the basic categories and divisions of art from his logical analysis of being and spirit, and then use them to illuminate art's history.

6. The three stages are never totally separate; we can find aspects of each in the others, but for any concrete artwork or genre, one stage will be the soul of the work and the others secondary notes or qualities (Hegel, VA 1:393/A 1:303). Derrida's idea of "the supplement" could apply here in interesting ways. While Hegel uses his categories and their implications to support normative judgments about the arts, those categories are flexible enough to include deviant or imperfect realizations, as well as intermediate forms. While treating some puzzling forms of symbolic art that don't fit well into his developmental scheme, Hegel remarks: "It is the same in aesthetics as it is in the natural sciences with certain classes of animals or other natural phenomena. In both spheres the difficulty lies in the fact that it is the very concept of nature and art which partitions itself and posits its differentiations. . . . The true classification, however, may proceed only out of the true concept, and hybrid productions can only find their place where the proper explicitly stable forms begin to dissolve and pass over into others" (Hegel, VA 1:491/A 1:382).

7. "Architecture . . . is the art of externality, so that here the essential differences depend on whether this external object has its meaning within itself or whether, treated as a means, it subserves an end other than itself, or whether in this subservience it appears at the same time as independent" (Hegel, VA 2:271/A 2:634).

8. Hegel's discussions of classical and romantic architecture are divided as is his overall treatment of art: universal, particular, individual. The general character of the stage is first described, followed by a particularized division of the stage's features and necessary aspects, and concluding with a discussion of individual works or categories of works. However, for symbolic architecture the general description, while it comes first, is not one of the three main sections, and all of the sections concern both particular types and individual works. When Hegel discusses symbolic art in general, as opposed to his discussion of symbolic architecture, he says that all the stages rework the same contradiction between meaning and form. There he first discusses art in which the disparity of content and form is not present in consciousness, then a sublime middle stage where meaning is consciously presented as transcending sensible form, and then a third stage where the tension between form and meaning becomes self-conscious, and artworks make explicit separations and comparisons between the two. These divisions of symbolic art do not map well onto Hegel's divisions of symbolic architecture. Most of his treatment of architecture coordinates with the subdivisions of the first stage of his treatment of symbolic art in general.

9. Hegel also cites the Tower of Belus, as described by Herodotus. He sees this as more important than Babel because its cosmological symbolism introduces differentiated meaning rather than pure abstraction.

10. For more on writing in architecture, and Hegel's treatment of Egypt, see John Sallis, *Stone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), especially chapter 3.

11. This creation of a pure unity by externalizing the people's will in a monument that has no other content than that externalization echoes the externalization of the will in the act of marking and making property (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, section 58).

12. Hegel's treatment of the pyramids was emphasized in Derrida's discussion of Hegel's doctrine of meaning in "Le puits et la pyramide," in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972). There Derrida deals with Hegel's discussion of symbolic art in general as a dawning awareness of spirit's negativity and of the role of absence in meaning. Hegel treats the pyramids more straightforwardly in his section on symbolic architecture, where he sees them as transitional forms. They stand between authentically symbolic architecture trying to express a meaning that is too indeterminate to be fully expressed, and classical architecture, where both form and meaning have become determinate and perfectly matched. The pyramids no longer are united with their natural meaning, since they refer to an absent central figure, the dead pharaoh, who is individualized, though not yet in the positive and present way offered by the Greek gods (Hegel, VA 2:294/A 2:653).

13. Although Hegel rejects Laugier's narrative of origins and his claim of conceptual priority for the corner post, Hegel does ultimately agree with Laugier in

the sense that he sees the distinction of enclosure (walls) from load-bearing (columns) as a conceptual key to classical architecture, which is the most authentic, though not the earliest, stage of building.

14. A similar logic applies to other parts of the temple form. Right angles and flat planes should predominate, because any other angle or surface will appear arbitrary or contingent. The divisions of the architrave, despite their wooden origins, speak of weight being borne—if the roof were put directly on the columns this would show naked need rather than free architectural beauty. The temple roof comes to a peak not because a Greek roof has to bear a snow load, but because a peaked roof shows itself as being supported and not itself supporting anything more. See Hegel, VA 2:314–18/A 2:670–73.

15. Hegel attributes the phrase *gefrorene Musik* to Friedrich Schlegel. In a note to his translation (Hegel, A 2:662), Knox says that he was unable to find the phrase in Schlegel's writings, and wonders if Hegel heard the phrase in conversation at Jena, or if Hegel is misremembering the phrase *erstarrte Musik* found in Schelling's lectures on the philosophy of art.

16. For other examples where Hegel censures excess in classical architecture, see Hegel, VA 2:310/A 2:666 on the thickness of columns, VA 2:319/A 2:674 on the proportions of the whole classical temple, and VA 2:322/A 2:677 on Roman orders and garlands on columns.

17. There is a further task for a building. Besides fulfilling its program, expressing its own functioning, and presenting its people's basic conceptions, the work stands in that larger story that is not the narrative of a single people but the story of architecture and of art as a whole.

18. Hegel to Marie Hegel, September 28, 1822, in Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, 585 (letter no. 436).

19. Hegel claims that it was French influence and taste that blinded the Germans to the validity of their Gothic tradition (Hegel, VA 2:330/A 2:684). By so celebrating the Gothic, Hegel was going against contemporary French and Italian tastes, but also downplaying native German Baroque/Rococo's church forms. See Karsten Harries, *The Bavarian Rococo Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

20. At the end of his discussion of romantic architecture, Hegel briefly discusses the art of gardening (Hegel, VA 2:349/A 2:699). He admits that the Italian and French do gardens best. Gardens should offer a second nature, a man-made landscape surrounding the building. English gardens may be painterly and picturesque, but they do not fulfill the function of a garden. A garden park that seems so natural is a great achievement. It brings design in what appears undesigned. Such parks are more like symbolic architecture, however, and they lack the proper subordinate function of a garden. Their fascination does not last; they become boring because in their lack of precise form their inner richness remains indefinite. They lack the Gothic combination of definite form and inner infinity (Hegel, VA 2:350/A 2:700). The Italians and the French make gardens that are architectural, not painterly. These gardens have lines, order, symmetry, rules. Yet they are not abstracted from the human; they change nature's expanse into a wider dwelling under an open sky (Hegel, VA 2:350/A 2:700). Hegel's failure to appre-

ciate the “soul” of English (and Oriental) gardens shows the essential modernism of his conception of self-consciousness.

21. Hegel claims a conceptual necessity for the cruciform plan of the Gothic cathedral. As the place of recollection it must have a closed outline, but as the mediation of finite and infinite, it must express the concrete unity of expressly distinct aspects. So it can't have a regular abstract shape without divisions. So it cannot continue the classical temple's rectangular form.

22. A deeper problem may lie behind this issue about the relative perfection of the different stages of architecture. There may be, despite what Hegel says, many nonparallel axes along which the developmental story could be ordered. This problem is evident, for example, in Hegel's treatment of the various historical religions. See Louis Dupré, “Transitions and Tensions in Hegel's Treatment of Determinate Religion,” in *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, ed. David Kolb (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

23. For more about this puzzling lack in Hegel's views, see my “The Spirit of Gravity: Architecture and Externality,” in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. William Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 83–96.

24. See, for example, George Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988).

25. In Hegel's political discussions he does not avoid discussing revivals of older political institutions in new transformed contexts.

26. Hegel usually discusses building types (temples, cathedrals, tombs, and so on) rather than individual named buildings. Among named buildings, symbolic architecture mentions more than the other two stages put together (fourteen in the symbolic, five in the classical, and four in the romantic, plus two gardens). The symbolic also includes more citations of other writers (twelve in the symbolic, four in the classical, and one in the romantic). Of the fourteen separate books cited, six are ancient writers, four are French and English accounts of discoveries in Egypt, and four are contemporary Germans (Hirt, Goethe, Schlegel, and Creuzer).

27. Hegel's personal architectural experience was influenced by Hirt as well; in a letter written during a journey to Prague, Hegel mentions that he is visiting the buildings that Hirt had recommended in conversation.

28. Hirt's work is not just descriptive; he seeks to discover the patterns and laws (*Gesetze, Grundsätze, Einrichtungen*) that lie behind the forms of each type of ancient building. In the third volume of his history, Hirt implies that his goal was to become the Winckelmann of architecture.

29. It is something of a cliché to label some building type “our modern cathedral”: office buildings, suspension bridges, superhighway systems, skyscrapers, and spacecraft have all been so baptized. If we must seek such a central type, I would be tempted to suggest that we look to suburban mixed-use developments. It might be useful to discuss these in the light of Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City polemic, which mixes Hegelian and anti-Hegelian themes.

30. During Hegel's lifetime Schinkel was erecting not only Berlin's great central theater and museum, but also a set of proto-modern office buildings derived from English mill architecture.

31. See Karsten Harries's discussion of the multiplicity of building types that can now serve as symbolic gathering points for community, in the last chapter of his *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).

32. "The compact unity in itself which the god has in sculpture disperses into the plurality of the inner lives of individuals whose unity is not sensuous but purely ideal. And so only here is God himself truly spirit, spirit in his community, God as this to-and-fro, as this exchange of his inherent unity with his actualization in subjective knowing and its individualization as well as in the universality and union of the multitude. In the community God is released alike from the abstraction of undeveloped self-identity and from his sculptural representation as immediately immersed in a bodily medium . . . so now what becomes on its own account an object of artistic representation is the most manifold subjectivity in its living movement and activity as human passion, action, and adventure, and, in general, the wide range of human feeling, willing, and neglect" (Hegel, *VA* 1:119/*A* 1:85–86).

33. Such a postmodern passing of time (*Ver-weil-en*) could be self-conscious communal life in a stronger way than an agoraic life looking out from the columned porch. This dwelling could have become aware of itself as expressing itself in art. The building could publicly perform in a communal narrative about art and architecture's career. Then the perspective of the philosophical observer and that of the observed community could come together. This would perhaps be an artistic parallel to the achievement of self-consciousness in the modern state, or to the way the "we" and the observed consciousness come together at the end of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

34. Many buildings today also take an ironic stance toward their "official" meaning and function. Such designs pose no major problems for Hegel's theory, formed as it was in the era of ironic novelists and poets. Hegel has much to say about the self-conscious, self-deprecating, or self-destructive irony and humor that form the later stages of romantic verbal art. For Hegel this showed art reaching its limits, almost unable to contain the movement of subjectivity. But when some buildings become conceptual art, and when philosophical or critical footnotes become essential to the experience of the building, is this a new kind of architecture or a new kind of hybrid verbal art, or is it leaving the confines of what Hegel understands as art?

35. The subject is *das Bedeutende für sich* (Hegel, *VA* 1:406/*A* 1:313), *anund-fürsichseiende Bedeutung* (*VA* 1:466/*A* 1:361).

Hegel on the Beauty of Sculpture

Stephen Houlgate

Hegel considers Greek sculpture of the mid-fifth century B.C. to provide the most perfect examples of ideal beauty. In this respect his views are close to those of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, whose influential work *History of Ancient Art* appeared in 1764.¹ Hegel's preference for the Greeks is not, however, simply a reflection of contemporary taste. It is rooted in a subtle analysis of the nature of sculpture itself and of what Herbert Read calls "the virtues proper to the art of sculpture."²

Art and Beauty

The art of sculpture, for Hegel, does not consist simply in the carving or casting of three-dimensional shapes. It consists in the creation of works of beauty. Human beings, in his view, are essentially self-conscious beings: not only do they have practical needs and concerns (for example, for food and shelter), but they are also interested in coming to a clear consciousness of their own nature and character, that is, in discerning the truth about themselves. Art, religion, and philosophy are deemed by Hegel to be the most important ways in which human beings articulate their self-understanding and self-consciousness. Art's primary purpose, therefore, is not to decorate dwellings or to promote moral and political reform, but to bring to mind who and what we are.³

In Hegel's view, what characterizes human beings above all are life, reason, and freedom or "spirit" (*Geist*). Since these qualities lie at the core of what it is to be human, we consider them to be of absolute value. Accordingly, they define for us not only what it is to be human, but also what it is to be *divine*.⁴ Art thus brings to mind a spiritual freedom that is both human and divine. Human understanding of freedom is not, however, uniform and unchanging, but develops over time. The more developed and explicit a civilization's understanding is, the more advanced and free it is.⁵ In the course of history, therefore, art gives expression to different

conceptions of human and divine freedom. This gives rise to three different types of art: symbolic, classical, and romantic art.⁶ In each case, however, art expresses its content not through philosophical concepts or the metaphors and rituals of religious faith, but through the *sensuously intuitible* media of stone, wood, color, or sound.⁷

The sensuous appearance or “shining forth” (*Scheinen*) of freedom or spirit is *beauty*.⁸ Art, for Hegel, is thus not contingently but necessarily concerned with beauty. Its *raison d’être* is to present spiritual freedom in a sensuously intuitible form, and beauty is precisely spiritual freedom manifesting itself in ways we can directly see and hear. The highest forms of this “spiritual” (*geistig*) beauty are to be found in classical and romantic art, for these give expression to a much more developed understanding of freedom than symbolic art. Besides spiritual beauty, Hegel also recognizes the existence of merely “sensuous” (*sinnlich*) beauty.⁹ This is the manifestation not of distinctively human and divine freedom, but rather of the vitality, strength, or elegance of which animals as well as humans are capable. The depiction of such beauty, for Hegel, is a legitimate, if subordinate, task for art.

The purpose of *sculpture*—like that of painting and poetry—is thus the creation of works of spiritual (and, to a lesser degree, sensuous) beauty. Hegel’s focus on the beauty of sculpture may strike some readers as unfortunate, for much modern sculpture has sought precisely to “emancipate” itself from beauty. From Hegel’s point of view, however, there can be no *art* of sculpture without beauty. The very purpose of art is to create beauty in which we see human and divine freedom rendered manifest. The purpose of sculpture, therefore, must be to create distinctively sculptural beauty, not to eschew beauty altogether. This purpose is fulfilled most magnificently, Hegel believes, by a select handful of fifth-century Greek artists.

Beauty in Sculpture

Pure sculptural beauty, for Hegel, consists in images of free and independent individuals—gods above all, but also mortals—standing (or maybe lying or sitting) at rest.¹⁰ Such individuals are detached from the concerns of the world and so are unmoved by emotion, desire, or need. They stand apart from others and are neither embroiled in intimate relations with their fellows nor involved in action. Their beauty resides in their marvelously self-contained freedom and equanimity: they display no urge to reach beyond themselves but rest sublimely content with themselves. As

Hegel puts it, sculpture at its most beautiful presents “the Divine as such in its infinite calm and sublimity [*Ruhe und Erhabenheit*], timeless, immobile, without purely subjective personality and the discord of actions and situations.”¹¹

This ideal beauty is quite different from that displayed by drama, in which characters proceed to action, conflict, and ultimately tragic (or comic) resolution. It also differs from the more relational beauty exhibited by painting, especially in images of the love between the Virgin and the Christ child or in delightful Dutch scenes of tranquil or exuberant domesticity.¹² The beauty of calm, self-sufficient individuality is specific to sculpture and not suited to other arts. It was found, Hegel believes, in Pheidias’s two great chryselephantine sculptures, the *Athena Parthenos* and the *Olympian Zeus* (both now lost). It can also be seen in other works, the originals of which are often attributed to or associated with Pheidias, such as the *Dresden Zeus* “benign in his majesty” (which Hegel saw in Dresden in the early 1820s), the *Athena Velletri* (which Hegel could have seen in the Louvre in 1827), and the *Tiber Apollo*.¹³

The “tranquil grandeur” (*stille Grösse*) of sculptural beauty exhibited by Greek statues belongs specifically to the sphere of *classical* art and beauty.¹⁴ Indeed, it constitutes the purest expression of such beauty. Greek tragic drama, by contrast, presents classical beauty in its most concrete and developed form: it shows “sculpturally” self-sufficient individuals stepping down, as it were, from their pedestals, engaging in action and bringing themselves into conflict with one another through their insistence on the supremacy of their own governing pathos (see *PKA* 127).

Sculptural beauty is the purest classical beauty because the peaceful, undisturbed self-sufficiency in which it consists entails the perfect fusion of the spirit and the body. The gods and mortals of fifth-century Greek sculpture are free spirits at home in, and utterly content with, their bodies. They are not restless souls seeking to escape the confines of their bodies or to subordinate them to their will. They are tranquil spirits that have, as it were, been willingly poured out into their bodies and who now stand there, commandingly beautiful in their equanimity and repose.¹⁵

Yet why should Hegel restrict sculptural beauty to such “blessed perfection without any inner struggle” (*VA* 2:400/*A* 2:740)? After all, there are many famous and admired sculptures of figures who are patently not at rest, either physically or spiritually: figures clearly in motion (such as *Hebe*—Figure G—with her wonderfully windswept drapery from the east pediment of the Parthenon), figures caught up in painful struggle (such as *Laocoön*), or figures in ecstatic, multifold rapture (such as Bernini’s *St. Teresa*).¹⁶ Why does Hegel not consider these to be examples of distinctively sculptural beauty? Is it that he simply takes over uncritically Winckel-

mann's predilection for "noble simplicity" and "tranquil grandeur" and his hostility to Baroque extravagance?¹⁷ I believe not. In his 1826 lectures on aesthetics, Hegel maintains that the peaceful "immersion in oneself" characteristic of ideal sculptural beauty is logically "connected with the totality of spatial externality" that distinguishes sculpture from painting, music, and poetry (*PKA* 172; *PK* 193). In none of his lectures, as far as I can see, does Hegel explain this connection in sufficient detail. It is possible, however, to reconstruct the logic behind that connection.

"The Most Appropriate Content for Sculpture"

Art, for Hegel, is not merely the material practice of coloring or modeling. It is the expression of the freedom of the human spirit. At its simplest and most primitive, art manifests human freedom by imbuing with spiritual significance that which is *not* spiritual and free itself, namely lifeless, inorganic matter. It thus transforms "dead" matter into the meaningful expression of spirit, freedom, and life.

The matter to be worked on and transformed must—at least to begin with—be devoid of spirit and freedom, for only in this way can human freedom prove itself to be wholly unbounded by its opposite. Such matter will be capable of motion; but it will have no *intrinsic* principle of mobility within it. It will be matter that is simply *there*—heavy, immobile, and extended in space—and art's task will be to animate it and imbue it with spirit.

The arts that come highest in Hegel's logical hierarchy—painting, music, and poetry—work with media that are much less heavily material than the one just described: the play of color and the sequence of fleeting sounds or words.¹⁸ The art that comes first or lowest in Hegel's hierarchy—whether or not it is historically the earliest—does, however, work with brute matter in space. This art is architecture. Architecture might seem to have a purely practical purpose: to provide shelter for human beings. Hegel regards it as an art, however, and so understands it to transform brute matter into the expression of freedom and spirit. Architecture's limitation, in his view, is that it gives stone or dead wood a form that is still only imperfectly spiritual. It confers on its material a form that is artificial (and so the product of human freedom) but that is nonetheless inorganic and abstract. Such a form is characterized by regularity, symmetry, and harmony of proportion—relations that are governed by mathematics rather than by genuine spiritual freedom. This is particularly

evident in classical architecture, in which right angles and geometrical shapes such as triangles and tapered cylinders predominate, but it can also be seen in the intricate and abstractly regular arabesques and rose windows of Gothic architecture.¹⁹

Sculpture comes next in Hegel's logical hierarchy of the arts because it gives lifeless, spiritless matter a form that is explicitly *organic* and *spiritual*.²⁰ In sculpture, "spirit so forms this externality that it is present to itself in it and recognizes in it the appropriate shape of its own inner life" (VA 2:362/A 2:710). The material shape in which human (and divine) freedom is incarnated in the world is that of the *human body*.²¹ Sculpture must, therefore, give a human form to brute matter if it is to turn that matter into the presentation of genuine human (and divine) freedom. Hegel's insistence that sculpture be anthropomorphic is thus not a mere "humanistic prejudice" (as Herbert Read calls Rodin's similar insistence).²² It is grounded in his philosophical understanding that sculpture can embody freedom only by giving matter the natural *shape* of freedom, namely that of the human body.

Note that the aim of sculpture, for Hegel, is not to "imitate" or "represent" the human body for its own sake.²³ It is to *give shape to freedom*, to present human freedom in its spatial and material embodiment. As we have seen, the matter in which freedom is expressed sculpturally is itself inert and lifeless. It does not move of its own accord but simply stands or lies there in space, immobile unless moved by an external agent. Such matter is thus essentially *at rest* in relation to the earth and to other surrounding objects. In sculpture, therefore, human freedom is embodied in a shape that is static and motionless, whether the individual depicted is himself at rest or in frozen motion. The twentieth century saw the creation of "mobiles" (for example, by Alexander Calder).²⁴ In Hegel's view, however, a genuine work of sculpture animates and gives human form to matter that is lifeless, and so stands there as the *immobile* incarnation of spirit.²⁵

The most appropriate content for sculpture is thus free spirit that is itself *at rest*, rather than caught up in motion or action. Hegel clearly recognizes that sculpture is quite capable of showing bodies in motion or action. The figure of Diana (or Artemis), he notes, is often shown in a dynamic pose: she "does not stand, absorbed in peaceful contemplation, but is usually displayed as moving [*gehend*], pressing forward, with her eye gazing straight in front of her into the distance."²⁶ Similarly, in groups, such as the Uffizi *Niobids* and the *Laocoön*, "sculpture proceeds . . . to display situations which have as their content conflicts, discordant actions, grief, etc."²⁷ Yet Hegel insists that the most proper content for sculpture is not motion or action, but free spirit at rest. Drama is the art in which action and motion are best depicted; sculpture can only ever be second

(or third) best at this. Sculpture is best suited, however, to presenting free individuals standing or lying motionless in their serene grandeur. As Hegel notes in his 1823 lectures on aesthetics, “resting, sleeping are simple situations, and they belong preeminently to sculpture” (VPK 91).

Hegel’s account of sculpture (as of all the arts) is not just descriptive but normative. He seeks to determine what is “peculiar” (*eigentlich*) to sculpture and on that basis to identify “the most appropriate content for sculpture” (VA 2:355, 429/A 2:704, 765). That content is not the only one that sculpture can present, but it is the one that lends itself most readily to *sculptural*, rather than dramatic or painterly, presentation. The distinctive task of sculpture, for Hegel, is to present a free—divine or human—individual, not acting dramatically, but simply standing (or lying) there, occupying space and *being* what he is.²⁸ Such a god or hero is a genuinely free individual with a rich and varied character; but he feels no need to engage in action, for all that he is is fully expressed in the mere *shape* of his body. He is thus completely at home in his body and is content simply to *be there*, to be *materially present*. Such a free individual is perfectly suited to be depicted in the static medium of marble or bronze, and is the one that ideal sculpture celebrates above all.

The Abstractness of Sculptural Beauty

In sculptural beauty nothing more than simple shape is employed to give expression to the individual’s freedom and character. In Hegel’s words, “the genuine and more severe ideal must . . . give a *body* to the spirit and make the spirit visible only through the shape [*Gestalt*] and its expression” (VA 2:382/A 2:726). According to Hegel, this lends sculptural beauty a certain abstractness, for it limits the expressive resources at sculpture’s disposal.²⁹ All sculpture has available to it to express the freedom of spirit is “heavy spatiality [and] materiality” and the “abstraction of form” (VPK 230; VA 2:381/A 2:726).

Since sculpture uses sheer material form or shape to render spiritual freedom visible, it excludes *color* (as it excludes sound) from its expressive repertoire. Sculpture does not lack all color whatsoever: both marble and bronze have their distinctive color. Unlike painting, however, sculpture does not employ the subtle interplay of different colors to portray the richly varied details of character or the manifold subtleties of emotion. It makes do with shape alone and presents as much of character and freedom as can be revealed by such shape.

Hegel is well aware that archaic and classical Greek sculptures were

invariably painted, often in a quite gaudy manner. He also notes that the two most famous masterpieces of Pheidias—the *Athena Parthenos* and the *Olympian Zeus*—were made of (or rather, covered with) ivory and gold, and so had at least two different colors.³⁰ Hegel argues, however, that such decoration is not intrinsic to ideal sculpture *as sculpture*, as the expression of freedom in *shape*. Statues were covered in paint, gold, or ivory for a social, political, or religious, not a specifically sculptural, purpose: they were colored in order to “adorn [the] god in the most magnificent manner,” to display the “riches of the people,” or out of simple tradition (PK 194; VAB 235).

In Hegel’s view, therefore, the unadorned ideal sculpture—the sculpture, as it were, *an sich*—is not multicolored but “monochrome” (*ein-farbig*).³¹ Winckelmann famously maintained that “a beautiful body is all the more beautiful, the whiter it is,” thereby privileging marble over other materials.³² Hegel also shows a slight preference for white marble, even though he knows (as does Winckelmann) that “in antiquity the most widespread and favorite material was bronze” (VA 2:441/A 2:774). It is important to note, however, that Hegel prefers white marble over bronze because of its greater *abstractness*: “The darker vaguer color, the sheen, the smoothness of bronze lacks in general the abstractness [*Abstraktion*] of white marble but it is, as it were, warmer” (VA 2:441/A 2:774; see also VAB 236). White marble is especially well suited to sculpture, therefore, not because it is white rather than any other color, but because it allows the viewer of sculpture to *abstract from color altogether* and focus exclusively on the shape at hand. White marble is preferable, in other words, because it is to all intents and purposes “colorless” (*farblos*)—though Hegel also adds that “the mildness of the color corresponds to the purpose of sculpture, namely to express that which is calm, naive, ideal” (VAB 235; VPK 231). The loss of paint from original Greek statues—and the fact that many surviving “Greek” works are actually highly polished Roman copies—is thus not to be regarded as a simple *loss*, from Hegel’s perspective. On the contrary, it has allowed the specifically sculptural achievement of the Greeks to emerge more clearly from underneath the “painterly” decoration with which they adorned their statues.

J. G. von Herder maintains that “sculpture is created for the hand, not for the eye.” It is to be appreciated either with one’s fingers or with “the fingers of [one’s] inner sense” (that is, by the eye schooled by touch).³³ For Hegel, by contrast, sculpture is a genuinely *visual* art. What it presents us with, however, is not a richly detailed, multicolored visual image. Unadorned sculpture, Hegel tells us, “can only proceed as far as general visibility [*allgemeine Sichtbarkeit*]” (VPK 230). It shows what can be seen without differences of color through the play of light and shadow alone: namely depth, contour, and shape. Hegel explains that we can best ap-

preciate the subtleties of shape—the “fine depressions and soft transitions”—when the illumination provides a sharp contrast between light and shade. This occurs, for example, when one views statues at night by flickering torchlight (as was fashionable at the time and as he himself had occasion to do in 1821 in Dresden). Yet even in such light, he notes, the eye cannot discern all the subtle distinctions of shape. He concludes, therefore—in a manner that brings him close to Herder after all—that some such distinctions are in fact “recognizable only by touch.”³⁴

Ideal sculpture does not invite the viewer to look beyond the shape to an invisible inner dimension of the individual portrayed, but asks the viewer to recognize the individual’s freedom and character in the visible contours and posture of the figure itself. For this reason, Hegel argues, ideal sculptures do not (or should not) have *eyes* whose concentrated look would draw one into an intimate region of inner feeling and emotion. The “look” (*Blick*), Hegel claims, “is what is most full of [an individual’s] soul, the concentration of his inmost personality and feeling.” It is just this expression of an individual’s soul, however, “that sculpture must lack” (VA 2:389/A 2:732; see also VPK 242).

This is not to say that ideal sculpture is utterly incapable of showing individuals who are withdrawn into themselves. It expresses withdrawal into oneself, however, in the pose of the figure or the angle of the head, not in the intensity of the eyes. Eyes are famously regarded as windows into the soul; in ideal sculpture, however, no such windows are necessary because the soul is *embodied* for all to see.

What is (or should be) missing from ideal sculpture is the sparkle in the eye that discloses the personality within. Such sculpture should not, however, lack eyes altogether. They form part of the overall shape of the face and so belong necessarily to the embodiment of free spirit. Indeed, the shape of the eye and its position in relation to the rest of the face play their own distinctive expressive role. In Egyptian sculpture, Hegel remarks (following Winckelmann), the eyes tend to be almost in the same plane as the forehead.³⁵ In ideal Greek sculpture, by contrast, the eyes lie much deeper—deeper even than in nature.³⁶ The effect of this, Hegel notes, is striking. Due to the deeper location of the eyes, the forehead appears more prominent than it does in nature, thus allowing the “thoughtful” (*sinnend*) part of the face to predominate. Consequently, “its expression of spirit springs forth more clearly, while the strengthened shadow in the orbits [*Augenhöhlen*] gives us of itself a feeling of depth and undistracted inner life, blindness to external things, and a withdrawal into the essence of individuality, the depth of which is suffused over the entire figure” (VA 2:392/A 2:734). Ideal sculpture thus expresses character and spirit in the shape of the eye and the shadows around it, rather than (as in painting) in the animated look of the eye itself.

Once again, Hegel is well aware that classical Greek sculptures in fact often had painted eyes (and that in some cases jewels were inserted into the eyeballs).³⁷ Such decoration, however, is not intrinsic to Greek statues *as sculptures*—as embodiments of free spirit—but is applied for the sake of “splendor” (*Pracht*) or out of tradition (*PK* 194; *PKA* 173). In ideal sculpture as such, shape is all: what seizes our attention is not the intensity or animation of a gaze, but the nuances of shape and pose. Accordingly, the ideal statue as such is “blind” (*VPK* 242). It lets itself be seen without seeing us in turn. The ideal sculpture thus stands apart from the viewer, offering to view nothing but the unseeing abstraction of human shape.³⁸

Hegel’s assertion that ideal sculpture lacks both color and seeing eyes is not an ill-founded historical claim. It is a claim about what is proper to, and so specifically *sculptural* about, such sculpture. Greek sculptures were often highly decorated. Sculpture *as sculpture*, however (rather than as the display of public wealth), is characterized by an irreducible *abstractness*. It gives concrete embodiment to the freedom of spirit, but in so doing it leaves to one side, and so abstracts from, important aspects of everyday human existence, such as color and seeing eyes. The nature of a statue, therefore, is to be “an abstract work of sculpture” because it expresses spirit through shape alone (*PK* 195; *PKA* 174). This is evidently a limitation of the art of sculpture in comparison with painting and poetry; but it is a limitation that is proper to and definitive of sculpture itself. Painting and poetry, of course, have their own limitations, but the images they present are more colorful, more varied, and more richly detailed than those presented by sculpture. Sculpture is thus much more obviously *abstract* than either of these arts. This is more evident to us than it was to the Greeks: for in the Roman copies and Greek originals that have come down to us, the monochrome shape and unseeing eyes intrinsic to sculpture confront us unadorned.

The extraordinary multicolored hyperrealism of Duane Hanson’s work in the twentieth century does not challenge Hegel’s position.³⁹ His point is a conceptual one: however well one might in fact be able to color statues, color does not belong to their intrinsic nature as *shaped* expressions of spirit. Like all the arts, sculptures “do not always keep in fact to the fundamental nature of that art in abstract immutability, for they come into living relation with varied purposes”; hence the decorating of Greek statues “in order to give the people who looked at such magnificent works an enjoyment of their power and richness” (*VA* 2:359/*A* 2:707). It is philosophy’s task, however, to understand the *concept* of things, whether or not that concept is rigorously adhered to in life or history. And according to its concept—that is, its nature as *sculpture*, rather than painting—ideal sculpture communicates through shape alone.

Nakedness and Drapery

Since freedom is expressed in bodily shape in ideal statuary, it might seem that all ideal sculpted figures should be naked. This was certainly Herder's view: "Sculpture does not allow bodies to be clothed."⁴⁰ Hegel, however, advocates nudity in sculpture only when the subject matter makes it specifically appropriate or necessary. He lists such cases as follows:

The Greeks exhibited in the nude: children, e.g., Eros, for in them the bodily appearance is wholly naïve, and spiritual beauty consists precisely in this entire naïveté and ingenuousness; youth, gods of youth, heroic gods and heroes like Perseus, Heracles, Theseus, Jason, for in them the chief thing is heroic courage, the use and development of the body for deeds of bodily strength and endurance; wrestlers in contests at the national games, where the sole thing that could be of interest was . . . the body's action, the force, flexibility, beauty, and free play of the muscles and limbs; . . . Aphrodite, because in her a chief feature is the sensuous charm of a woman [*der sinnliche weibliche Liebreiz*]. (VA 2:405–6/A 2:745; see also VAB 222)

Otherwise, Hegel maintains, gods and goddesses were portrayed clothed, especially, as in the cases of Zeus, Athena, or Hera, when they possessed a "higher, thoughtful [*sinnend*] significance" and "an inner seriousness of the spirit" (VA 2:406/A 2:745).

In describing ideal sculpted naked flesh, Hegel takes over from Winckelmann the latter's striking metaphors of "undulation" and "fluidity." Ideal sculpted flesh is animated, Hegel contends, by the fact that anatomical features, such as muscles and veins, are not left indeterminate but are all "finely indicated" (PKA 176). At the same time, such details are not allowed to stand out by themselves but are made to flow into one another with almost imperceptible subtlety. In ideal sculpted flesh, therefore, nothing is flat and unconnected: there are no "straight lines" or "abstract even surfaces, circles, and rigidly geometrical curves," but rather "almost invisible nuances of projection and depth" and almost invisible transitions between them (VPK 240; VA 2:420/A 2:756–57). (In this respect, Picasso's groundbreaking Cubist sculpture *Head of a Woman* [1909–10] could hardly be *less* ideal.)⁴¹ The effect created by such nuanced transitions is thus one of gently "undulating lines" (*Wellenlinien*) that bring out the organic character of the figure.⁴² In looking at ideally sculpted flesh, Hegel states, "one gets the feeling of an animated fluid [*einer belebten Flüssigkeit*] . . . in which each part has its particular form and differences and a distinction [*Auszeichnung*] that does not harm the whole" (PKA 176).

Winckelmann contrasted the “undulating” (*wellenförmig*) quality of late classical sculpture (especially the work of Praxiteles and Lysippos) with what he held to be the more “foursquare” quality of Polykleitos’s high classical statues.⁴³ Hegel, however, sees such undulation as characteristic of *all* ideal sculpted flesh. Nonetheless, he agrees with Winckelmann that the most beautifully “fluid” flesh is to be found in statues of more youthful gods, such as Apollo. Such “fluidity,” he makes clear, is both fully animated and utterly calm. It is thus perfectly suited to the depiction of gods at rest (which, as we have seen, is the principal task of ideal sculpture). “In childhood and youth,” Hegel states, “the boundaries of the forms flow into one another rather unnoticeably and they fade into one another so delicately that, as Winckelmann says . . . one might compare them with the surface of a sea [*Meer*] unruffled by the winds, of which one could say that although it is in constant movement it is nevertheless calm.”⁴⁴

Hegel notes that in statues of more mature gods, such as Zeus, “the distinctions appear more markedly and must be elaborated into a more definite characterization” (VA 2:420/A 2:756). Yet they too must be given a fluid, organic form if they are to be ideal. Calm, undulating fluidity—characteristic of the youthful above all—thus actually constitutes the ideal for *all* beautiful sculpted flesh.

Free corporeal beauty requires flesh to have a certain harmonious, undulating *texture*. The artist must “bring each of the tiniest traits of the figure into harmony with the whole” through nuanced transitions from one anatomical feature to another, rather than through abrupt changes of surface or sharp angles (VA 2:419/A 2:756). Hegel notes that different *parts* of the body also give expression to an individual’s freedom to a greater or lesser degree. Certain parts, he claims, primarily display an animal vitality and strength or a sensual charm and so have “sensuous beauty.” Other parts, such as the head, hands, and arms, are more explicitly suited to express the free *spirit* of the individual. Such free spirit, Hegel suggests, is also manifested clearly in the overall “stance” (*Stellung*) of the figure.⁴⁵

In the case of those gods, such as Zeus and Athena, whose beauty is less sensuous and more spiritual, and who are thus portrayed fully or partly clothed, the drapery should not, therefore, conceal the body altogether. It should, rather, cover “the organs which are necessary . . . for the body’s self-preservation, for digestion etc.,” but *reveal* those parts of the body in which freedom of spirit is explicitly expressed (VA 2:405/A 2:745). The head and the hands are invariably left completely uncovered in ideal depictions of such deities; but the arms, legs, and overall stance of the body should be revealed *by the very drapery that covers them*.⁴⁶ The way in which these limbs and the stance of the body are disclosed is through the *fall* of the drapery.

Ideal drapery should itself be the expression of freedom and so fall freely about the body. In this way, it will form “free folds” (*freie Falten*) of its own accord. At the same time, the fall and folds of the garment will be modified and shaped by the position of the limbs and posture of the body, which thereby become visible themselves. In this way, freely falling drapery discloses the shape and stance of the body in which free spirit is manifested.⁴⁷ The whole *clothed body* thus becomes the expression of the freedom of spirit and character.

Like Winckelmann, Hegel criticizes “modern artists”—Bernini, perhaps?—who adorn their figures with a “complicated unnatural throw of folds.”⁴⁸ For in the work of such artists, drapery no longer serves to reveal the body on which it hangs but gains an (artificially engendered) life of its own. Nineteenth-century fashion also comes in for harsh criticism from Hegel, because it completely conceals the body beneath “stiff sacks with stiff folds”—though he admits that the “classicizing” female fashion of the early nineteenth century does approach more closely to “ideal” drapery (VAB 223; PK 198).

Unlike Winckelmann and Herder, Hegel makes no reference (to my knowledge) to “wet drapery.”⁴⁹ Such drapery in its marvelously crafted transparency serves to reveal the *sensuous* beauty of the female body (as in the famous reclining *Aphrodite* from the east pediment of the Parthenon). Indeed, in some cases, such the dancing *Nereids* from Xanthos and the *Nike Paionios*, wet drapery approaches the condition of total nudity.⁵⁰ As we know, Hegel does not object to nudity in sculpture, but deems it necessary for the sculptural presentation of deities such as *Aphrodite*. His apparent silence on the subject of “wet drapery” thus cannot be due to any prejudiced “opposition to sensuality” on his part.⁵¹ It may, however, be due to the fact that “wet drapery” doesn’t perform precisely the function that Hegel assigns to ideal drapery in sculpture. Ideal drapery, for Hegel, is an *alternative* to nudity in that it conceals certain parts of the body from view and reveals only those aspects of the body that express the thoughtful freedom of spirit and character. “Wet drapery,” by contrast, is a (more or less) veiled form of nudity itself. Strictly speaking, therefore, it does not count as *drapery* in Hegel’s specific sense.

As well as describing the ideal drapery for sculpture, Hegel also discusses what he takes to be the ideal shape of the sculpted face: the so-called Greek profile. Much of what he has to say is taken from Winckelmann. He does not follow the latter blindly, however. He draws on Winckelmann’s insights because he believes that they shed light directly on the shapes that best express human freedom and spirit.

The Greek profile is characterized by “the almost straight or only gently curved line on which the forehead is continued to the nose without

interruption.” This line is aligned vertically “to a second one which if drawn from the root of the nose to the auditory canal makes a right angle with the forehead-nose line.”⁵² In the head of an animal, such as a dog, the eyes and brow are set back and the nose and mouth pushed forward: “The express prominence of these formations exclusively devoted to natural needs and their satisfaction [thereby] gives the animal head the appearance of being merely adapted to natural functions and without any spiritual ideal significance” (VA 2:384/A 2:728). In the so-called Roman profile, by contrast, the brow protrudes too much, causing the nose to jut out from underneath the brow. Consequently, “the forehead in its isolated position acquires a look of severity [*Härte*] and obstinate spiritual self-concentration.” The Greek profile constitutes a mean between these two. It is deemed to be ideal by Hegel because the brow, which is connected with “meditation” and “reflection” and therefore thoughtful freedom, is in “beautiful harmony” with the nose, such that “the nose . . . by being drawn up towards the spiritual part, acquires itself a spiritual expression and character” (VA 2:385–86/A 2:729–30). The Greek profile is thus the direct facial expression of human spiritual freedom.

The ideal overall bodily stance, Hegel contends, is also expressive of freedom. It should thus not be rigidly static, but indicative of some movement. In Hegel’s view, it is such an animated stance that above all distinguishes classical Greek from Egyptian sculpture:

While the Egyptians . . . in their sculptures represented the gods with legs closed together, unmoved head, and tightly closed arms, the Greeks release the arms and legs from the body and give to the body a walking stance [*schreitende Stellung*] and, in general, one moved [*bewegt*] in many ways. (VA 1:263/A 1:201)

The sculptural ideal is therefore an individual who is completely self-contained and at rest, and so not actually engaged in action or motion, but who is also clearly alive and animated (even if he or she is lying down or sleeping). It is this animation that turns ideal sculpted figures into “living shapes” rather than mere abstractions.⁵³

This brings us to the heart of Hegel’s theory of sculptural beauty. Such beauty, as we have seen, is *abstract* insofar as it is colorless and blind, but *concrete* insofar as it gives shape and embodiment to freedom and life. Sculptural beauty thus stands in the middle between the static monumentality of architecture and the richly variegated beauty of painting and poetry. Sculpture is not only at the center of classical art, therefore, it is at the center of art as such.⁵⁴ Consequently, it is the most purely aesthetic of all the arts: more human and humane than architecture but less inward

and profound than painting, music, and poetry. In the abstractly concrete beauty of ideal sculpture, we see beauty in its purest and highest form.⁵⁵

Hegel does not pretend to be a connoisseur of sculpture and its history, though on his visits to Munich and Dresden (and possibly Paris) he did see at first hand Roman copies of Greek originals. (In Dresden he may also have seen plaster casts of sculptures, such as the *Apollo Belvedere*, that were well known at the time.)⁵⁶ He does not seek, therefore, to compete with the art critic or art historian. His aim is to clarify the distinctive purpose of sculpture and to help us understand what sculpture is best suited to achieve. Yet the suspicion lingers that Hegel's account of sculpture is much too prescriptive and restrictive: for it would appear that many more works fall outside the range of sculptural beauty, as Hegel defines it, than fall within it. Indeed, Hegel's philosophy risks excluding from the realm of the "properly sculptural" most of the Hellenistic, medieval, and Baroque statues that we have come to love and admire. Does this not suggest that Hegel's theory of sculpture is of very limited value? Not at all: for that theory is in fact much more flexible than I have so far indicated.

Different Forms of the Sculptural Ideal

Hegel not only outlines the general character of ideal sculpture. He also argues that ideal sculpture is subject to a "progressive inner development" in the course of which it subtly alters its character and thereby "begins to transcend [the] harmony [*Zusammenstimmen*] with its own essential nature" (VA 2:446/A 2:778–79). This development is not merely accidental, but is made necessary by sculpture itself. Furthermore, it is both logical and historical. On the one hand, ideal sculpture takes on a variety of logically distinct forms; on the other hand, sculpture undergoes significant historical change. We will briefly consider both forms of "development" in turn.

Ideal sculpture presents the freedom of spirit not in a series of actions, like drama, but in the "tranquility of shape [*Ruhe der Gestalt*]" (VAB 209). In so doing, however, it does not confine itself to a single mode of presentation. Ideal sculpture, first and foremost, portrays the gods "in beautiful, simple, inactive repose in no specific situation" (VA 2:431/A 2:766). Such simplicity of repose, which constitutes pure ideal beauty, is found in works already mentioned, such as the *Dresden Zeus*, *Tiber Apollo*, and *Athena Velletri*. Divine tranquility and repose are also encountered in sculpted figures that are slightly less abstracted from the world. These figures are depicted in specific *situations* that are "naïve" or "harmless

[*unbefangen*]" (VA 2:431/A 2:766). As an example of such harmlessly situated divinity, Hegel cites "Venus arising from the bath, conscious of her power, quietly looking into the distance" (that is, Praxiteles' *Cnidian Aphrodite*).⁵⁷ He might also have cited Praxiteles' *Apollo Sauroktonos* eyeing a lizard on a tree, or the enchanting *Artemis of Gabii* fastening her mantle (copies of both of which he could have seen in the Louvre).⁵⁸ Hegel notes that such figures do not lose any of their ideal beauty through their involvement in specific situations. On the contrary, he assures us, "the tranquillity [*Ruhe*] and serene blessedness of the figures"—and thus their beauty—"are undimmed [*nicht getrübt*]" (VA 1:264/A 1:202).

It is not only the gods, however, who are portrayed in specific situations. Ideal sculpture also depicts human beings, as well as satyrs and fauns, in situations that are harmless and tranquil. Hegel cites Polykleitos's famous spear-carrier (*Doryphoros*), as well as Silenus cradling the young Bacchus "with laughter and infinite sweetness and grace," as examples of such calmly engaged ideal individuals. Other sculpted figures are caught up in rather more dynamic activity. Some are involved in games (such as Polykleitos's knucklebone players), some in athletics (such as Myron's *Diskobolos*), and some just carry out a familiar human task, like pulling a thorn from one's foot (such as the "charming" *Spinario*).⁵⁹

In none of these cases is a dramatic action portrayed that might lead to conflict or some other serious outcome. All we see is a harmless "fleeting" moment plucked from nature and "now made permanent by the sculptor" (VA 2:432/A 2:767). In the more dynamic examples just cited, ideal sculpture takes a clear step away from the "simple, *inactive repose*" that characterizes pure sculptural beauty. Yet even in these examples crucial aspects of the sculptural ideal are preserved, for what we see are individuals who, in their respective pursuits, exhibit the same "serenity" (*Heiterkeit*) and the same "sense of reconciliation, of spiritual freedom and being-at-home-with-oneself [*Beisichsein*]" that inform the tranquil self-absorption of the gods (VA 2:432/A 2:767). Sculptural beauty is thus not lost in depictions of situated individuals—even when they are active—but rather develops into a more complex and multifaceted form of itself.

Sculpture moves much further away from its ideal with the creation of sculptural *groups*. Strictly speaking, groups are "not suitable for sculpture" because, as we have seen, the sculptural ideal is that of an independent, self-sufficient individual (VAB 228). Furthermore, such groups often show figures in action or situations of serious conflict and pain. Groups thus appear to fall outside the sculptural ideal altogether.

Hegel notes, however, that certain groups are just "peaceful juxtapositions" of individuals and show no interaction between them. They are "free groups not expressive of any real action or its consequence" and

so are “entirely fitted for representation in sculpture” after all. As an example of such loose groupings Hegel cites “the two colossal horse-tamers in Rome on Monte Cavallo” (the Quirinal Hill), a cast of one of which was in Munich.⁶⁰

Other groups, however, depart much more explicitly from the sculptural ideal by graphically depicting grief and distress (such as the Uffizi *Niobids*), or conflict and “the effort of the moment,” as in the *Laocoön* (VA 2:434, 400/A 2:768–69, 741). Yet Hegel insists that, even in thoroughly negating the sculptural ideal in this way, such groups nonetheless can and do *preserve* crucial aspects of that ideal.

Niobe, for example, is said by Hegel to retain her “pure sublimity [*Hoheit*] and unimpaired beauty” in her very distress (VA 3:53/A 2:826). In contrast to Niobe, *Laocoön* is depicted struggling heroically for life (against the serpent). In this case, too, however, something of ideal beauty is preserved in what is otherwise an obviously nonideal scene. As Hegel remarks (echoing Winckelmann), “Despite the convulsive contraction of the body and the tension of all the muscles, the nobility of beauty [*Adel der Schönheit*] is still preserved, and not in the remotest degree is there any approach to grimaces, distortion, or dislocation.”⁶¹

According to Hegel, as sculpture moves away from the ideal of the unperturbed, tranquil individual toward the depiction of individuals who are more active, more emotionally charged, and more intimately involved with one another, it departs from what is properly *sculptural*. Indeed, as is even more evident in reliefs, it becomes more dramatic and more painterly.⁶² In this sense, ideal sculpture progressively *negates itself* and approaches the condition of other—romantic—arts. This logical development is made necessary by sculpture itself. It is intrinsic to sculpture, therefore, to go *beyond* what is strictly appropriate for sculpture.

What is appropriate for sculpture, on Hegel’s account, is thus much richer and more complex than it first appears. Sculpture achieves such richness and complexity by leaving behind the pure ideal of beauty that is itself made necessary by the nature of sculpture. At the same time, sculpture *preserves* aspects of its distinctive ideal beauty in the very process of transcending it. Ideal sculpture thus continues to be itself—at least in part—in the very transformation and negation of itself.⁶³

Yet why does ideal sculpture necessarily differentiate itself in this way into a variety of forms? Hegel does not address this question as directly as he should. The answer, however, is clear to see: sculpture gives *concrete* embodiment to freedom in the shape of the sculpted human body; yet such embodiment is also *abstract* in being colorless and blind and ideally taking the form of an individual abstracted from interaction with others. Sculpture thus harbors a certain tension within its very na-

ture: it gives concrete, but only *abstractly* concrete, expression to freedom. The principal purpose of sculpture, however, is to give *concrete* expression to freedom, in contrast to architecture, which works with more abstractly geometrical forms. As I understand it, it is this intrinsic and primary orientation toward concreteness that leads sculpture beyond its own ideal to the depiction of active individuals and groups and finally to reliefs.

Sculpture also renders itself more concrete by progressively *humanizing* itself.⁶⁴ The emergence in ideal sculpture of more situated, active, and emotionally affected individuals goes hand in hand with the portrayal of a much richer range of human experience.

Ideal sculpture, Hegel reminds us, served in ancient Greece not just an aesthetic but also a religious function. Many Greek statues were made to provide temples with images in which the gods themselves were held to reside; this, indeed, is the “genuine task of sculpture” (VA 2:431/A 2:766). Others were “votive” works produced to thank a god for past favors or to ensure future benefits.⁶⁵ Ideal sculpture thus has at its core images of the *gods* (in human form). In Hegel’s view, however, the Greek gods actually personify different aspects of human freedom and character.⁶⁶ The embodiment of the divine in ideal sculpture is thus at the same time the embodiment of what is to be celebrated or respected in human life.

Ideal sculpture also presents images of explicitly human, rather than divine, individuals (though the difference between the two is often very subtle).⁶⁷ In this way, the content of sculpture becomes more concrete: we see images of mortal heroes and athletes, as well as children (especially in later Greek art), all portrayed with marvelous idealized naturalism. Hegel notes that certain aspects of human life that are “excluded from the lofty ideal figures of the gods” are also depicted in statues of satyrs and fauns. This includes “human need, delight in life, sensuous enjoyment, satisfaction of desire” (VA 2:425/A 2:760). Some of these (mildly Dionysian) creatures are sculpted so beautifully, we are told, that their bodies could easily be exchanged for that of Apollo (as in the *Pouring Satyr* of Praxiteles, a copy of which Hegel could have seen in Dresden).⁶⁸

Human qualities can also be expressed indirectly in images of animals. The horse, for example, “stands in close connection with the mettle, bravery, and dexterity of masculine heroism and heroic beauty”; and Hegel follows Goethe in lavishing special praise on the “unsurpassable horse’s head”—Goethe’s *Urpferd*—from the Parthenon.⁶⁹

Ideal sculpture, for Hegel, thus encompasses much more than just gods at rest. It embraces a broad range of individuals from gods to humans to satyrs and fauns (and centaurs) to animals. All such individuals, however, give expression to aspects of *human* freedom and character, or at least to the “animal vitality” (PK 197) that humans share with other

creatures. Ideal sculpture encompasses all these individuals in various conditions of inaction and action because it necessarily gives itself greater and greater concreteness. Strictly speaking, sculpture's ideal takes a narrowly defined form: that of *inactive repose*. Hegel recognizes, however, that sculpture does not and should not adhere rigidly to the narrow ideal that is proper to it. In his view, ideal sculpture necessarily *differentiates* itself into a plethora of forms. These move progressively away from the ideal of inactive repose, yet they also retain significant features of that ideal: animation, serenity, nobility, being-at-home-with-oneself. The sculptural ideal thus mutates logically into different forms of *itself*.

We will now look briefly at Hegel's comments on the historical development of ideal sculpture. This development is partly determined by social and political factors, but it is also governed by the logic of sculpture itself.

Ideal Sculpture in History

Ideal sculpture is identified by Hegel with the sculpture of the Greeks, who had the greatness to understand what the "concept" of sculpture required—except for the fact that they added color to their statues (*VPK* 231). The most important precursors of and influence on Greek sculpture, we are told, were the Egyptians (whose art Hegel saw at first hand among the "Aegyptiaca" of General Minutoli in Berlin in 1823).⁷⁰ Hegel praises the technical skill of Egyptian sculptors, but criticizes their art for being static and unchanging: Egyptian sculpture adheres too rigidly to certain set types and lacks the differentiated individuality and animation of classical Greek art.⁷¹

Preclassical, "archaic" Greek sculpture—of the sixth century B.C.—begins to introduce more individuality and life into its figures, but it too remains dominated by certain types, such as the kouros and kore. Hegel describes archaic Greek art, therefore, as "severe" (*streng*).⁷² The term "severe" is often applied by modern critics to early classical, rather than archaic, Greek art, to reflect the "tendency toward a reduction in ornamental detail . . . and toward a general simplicity of surface" in such art. The facial expression in early classical works, such as the *Blond Boy* and *Aspasia*, is also often characteristically "moody" compared to the famous "archaic smile."⁷³ For Hegel, however, it is *archaic* art that is "severe"—even though female korai are often given considerable decorative detail—because it sticks closely to what is typical and shows no real freedom to develop new bodily poses and imbue its figures with individuality.

The move to ideal, classical art occurs when sculpture is no longer dominated by certain types of figure, but “the lightning flash of genius strikes the tradition and imparts freshness and vivacity to the presentation.” In such art the general content—the nature and character of the gods and heroes—is given by religion and mythology, but “the free and living individualization which [the artist] gives to every part of his creation is the fruit of his own insight, is his work and his merit.”⁷⁴ The gods and heroes depicted are thus animated by being given different poses suited to their individual characters. They are also modeled with subtle attention to anatomical detail and to the ways in which the shape of the body responds to shifts in stance and posture.

The high classical period falls roughly in the second third of the fifth century B.C. This is the time of Polykleitos and Pheidias, and is the period in which, according to Hegel, sculpture attained its *purest* ideal beauty. Gods and mortals are portrayed as “enclosed in themselves [*in sich abgeschlossen*]” (VPK 247), as detached and self-sufficient, and as serenely at home and at rest in their beautifully shaped bodies. Hegel describes such high classical works in vocabulary that is almost identical to that of Winckelmann: they exhibit, he says, “noble naïveté” (*edle Naïvetät*) and “tranquil grandeur” (*stille Grösse*).⁷⁵ He also echoes Winckelmann in finding in ideal beauty a certain unmistakable “sublimity [*Erhabenheit*]” (PK 192; PKA 172). For Winckelmann, *all* beauty displays sublimity due to its unity and simplicity.⁷⁶ For Hegel, however, sublimity is characteristic of high classical art in particular and appears to be associated less with simplicity and more with the distinctive “aloofness” of such art. In 1821, for example, Hegel refers to the gods being “exalted [*erhaben*] above circumstances and matters of secondary importance.”⁷⁷ Such sublimity is embodied in the stance of the figures and is not to be confused with that exhibited in “symbolic” Judaic and Islamic art by the divine that utterly transcends embodiment. It is also quite different from that described by Kant: it does not overwhelm or terrify us, but rather leaves us admiring the lofty indifference of the beautiful gods and mortal heroes we see incarnated before us.⁷⁸ Greek sublimity thereby confers a “severity” (*Strenge*) on high classical statues that differs from that of tradition-bound archaic Greek art. The ideal sculpture of high classical art presents individuated gods who are “severe” because they stand there *simply being themselves* and do not, as it were, trouble themselves trying to please the viewer.⁷⁹

Hegel associates the lofty ideal beauty of high classical art above all with the work of Pheidias and with the Elgin Marbles—“masterpieces ascribed to Pheidias or necessarily recognized as belonging to his period and chiseled by his pupils.” It is not clear whether Hegel ever saw casts of the latter—such casts did not reach Dresden, for example, until the late

1830s when Hegel was dead—but he notes that “universal praise is given to the expression of independence, of self-repose, in these figures” and that “our admiration [has] been intensified to an extreme by their free vivacity.” In particular, Hegel remarks, public praise “comes back ever anew to the figure of the recumbent river-god [*Ilissos*] which is amongst the most beautiful things preserved to us from antiquity.”⁸⁰

Hegel does not himself use the term “high classical” but speaks throughout simply of “classical” art. He points out, however, that a subtle change occurs in ideal sculpture “after the time of Pheidias,” specifically in the period of Praxiteles and Skopas, that is, in the second third of the fourth century B.C. He thus distinguishes in practice, if not in name, between high classical and late classical sculpture, just as Winckelmann distinguishes the “great,” “high” style from the “beautiful” style.⁸¹

In Hegel’s view, the art of Praxiteles does not cease being purely and classically *ideal*: the *Cnidian Aphrodite* arising from her bath still displays the “tranquillity [*Ruhe*] and serene blessedness” that characterizes the beautiful sculpted gods of the previous century (VA 1:264/A 1:202). Yet such figures as the *Cnidian Aphrodite* or the *Pouring Satyr* manifest a “milder grace and loveliness of form” (*mildere Anmut und Lieblichkeit der Gestalt*) than the more severe creations of Pheidias. Aphrodite in particular has “as her chief expression sensuous beauty and its victory, in short grace, charm, tenderness [*Zärtlichkeit*],” albeit “moderated and elevated by the spirit” (VA 2:443, 428/A 2:777, 763). As a consequence of this softening of ideal beauty, Hegel notes, the differences between male and female form become less sharp in fourth-century than in fifth-century sculpture. In particular, “the more youthful divine figures of Bacchus and Apollo often slip into the delicacy and softness [*Weiche*] of feminine forms, indeed often acquire single traits of the female body.”⁸²

All classical sculpture which successfully depicts gods and mortals in *tranquil repose*—whether unsituated or situated—creates images of pure ideal beauty. In late classical sculpture, however, the severity and aloofness of high classical—especially Pheidian—art give way to a greater willingness to charm and delight the eye of the viewer (yet “without finding its main aim achieved by mere gracefulness”).⁸³ This interest in charming the viewer becomes considerably stronger, indeed predominant, in post-Alexandrian, or what we now call “Hellenistic,” art. Winckelmann did not draw a sharp distinction between late classical and post-Alexandrian sculpture: both belonged to what he called the “beautiful style.” For Hegel, by contrast, the “highest blossoming of art” was over by the time of Alexander.⁸⁴

Hellenistic art, in Hegel’s view, is characterized by a marked turn *away* from the pure ideal beauty of classical art toward what is primarily

“pleasing” (*gefällig*) and “agreeable” (*angenehm*). At the heart of such art is the “development of the individual and sensuous aspect of the object, so that the ideal passes over from loftiness [*vom Hohen*] to . . . a coaxing gracefulness [*schmeichelnde Anmut*]” (VA 2:431, 457/A 2:766, 788). The principal aim is thus no longer to depict the divine (or human) individual in his or her self-contained independence—“the god for himself” (PK 192)—but to appeal directly to what the *viewer* will find attractive and engaging. Late classical art, for Hegel, sought to invest its figures with a softness and charm that high classical art lacked, but it was not governed primarily by a “craving to please [*Sucht zu gefallen*]” (VAB 190): its principal concern was to embody the beautiful independence and repose of the respective god or mortal. Hellenistic art, however, seeks above all to create a visual *effect* for the viewer. The matter itself—the individual portrayed—is no longer the main concern, but rather “appearance [*Erscheinen*] becomes its purpose.”⁸⁵

This last remark of Hegel’s recalls the claim apparently made by Lysippos—Alexander’s court sculptor—that by earlier sculptors “men were represented as they really were, but by him they were represented as they appeared.”⁸⁶ Lysippos took account of ordinary optical experience in casting his figures and was perhaps the first to require viewers to move around his sculptures in order to understand them. He is regarded as “probably the single most creative and influential artist of the entire Hellenistic period,” and so may be said to have pointed sculpture in the direction Hegel describes.⁸⁷ Surprisingly, however, Hegel makes no mention of him.

Winckelmann admired many works of Hellenistic sculpture and famously praised the *Apollo Belvedere* as the “highest ideal of art.”⁸⁸ Hegel, by contrast, follows contemporary taste in no longer valuing the statue (or the *Venus de’ Medici*) so highly, since “we have come to know works deeper in expression and more vital and more mature in form.” He cites approvingly an “English traveller”—William Hazlitt—who dismissed the *Apollo Belvedere* as a “theatrical coxcomb,” and in his 1821 lectures he notes that the Apollo’s “pride and loftiness already show an intention [*Intention*] that no longer belongs to the ideal style.”⁸⁹

Further criticism is leveled at another favorite of Winckelmann’s: the *Laocoön*. Winckelmann calls the *Laocoön* “the most beautiful and great work of the highest period of art.”⁹⁰ For Hegel, by contrast, it belongs to a time “which aims at outstripping simple beauty and life by a deliberate display of its knowledge in the build and musculature of the human body, and tries to please by an all too subtle delicacy in its workmanship.” With this well-known work, therefore, “the step from the innocence and greatness of art to mannerism [*Manier*] has here already been taken” (VA 2:434–35/A 2:769).

In Hegel's view, then, Hellenistic art moves away from the pure classical ideal of individual independence and repose toward sculpture that is more pleasing to the eye, more sensuously appealing, more mannered, and more dynamic.⁹¹ Yet it does not witness the complete loss of ideal beauty: for, as we saw earlier, even the *Laocoön* preserves the "nobility of beauty" amid the "convulsive contraction of the body and the tension of all the muscles" (VA 2:434/A 2:769). Furthermore, some of the statues that depict the serenity and freedom of ideal beauty in harmless situations—such as *Silenus with the Infant Bacchus*—fall within the Hellenistic period. On Hegel's interpretation, therefore, Hellenistic art does not represent the complete extinction of ideal beauty. It incorporates a variety of different styles in which aspects of such beauty are combined with greater or lesser degrees of mannerism and the "craving to please."

The development of sculpture beyond pure classical beauty, without the total loss of such beauty, is continued in the era of Christian or "romantic" art. Hegel maintains that the more inward romantic sensibility—found, for example, in the love of the Virgin Mary for the Christ child—does not find its highest and fullest expression in sculpture. Nonetheless, he acknowledges that sculpture can give moving expression to such inwardness in shaped marble and carved wood (if not as successfully as painting).⁹² In so doing, however, romantic sculpture moves even further beyond the classical ideal than Hellenistic art.

This is particularly apparent in medieval sculpture which portrays "the birth, baptism, Passion, Resurrection, and so many other events in the life of Christ" and in the process often presents figures contorted by pain (VA 2:459/A 2:789; VAB 237). Romantic sculpture, unlike ideal classical art, also often embraces the details of ordinary, everyday, prosaic existence. Despite departing—sometimes considerably—from the standards of classical Greek art, however, romantic religious and secular art are both capable of their own distinctive beauty. Hegel praises Dürer's "excellent small figures in wood," for example, and he also commends the "extremely lively presentation" of the goose-seller in the marketplace in Nuremberg (VAB 235; VA 2:459/A 2:789).

Romantic sculpture attains its highest beauty when it unites the inward Christian sensibility with the classical Greek concern for ideal bodily form. Michelangelo in particular—a cast of whose *Pietà* Hegel saw in Berlin and could not "sufficiently admire"—displays the most outstanding "productive originality" in combining "the plastic principle of the Greeks with the sort of soulful animation [*Beseelung*] intrinsic to romantic art" (VA 2:460/A 2:790). Hegel points out that contemporary Neoclassical sculpture also attempts to blend Greek and modern sensibilities, and that modern figures are thus often portrayed in ideal Greek drapery. This is quite appropriate, he contends, for the depiction of someone like George

Washington, for his range of activity is not restricted to one area, such as military life, but forms a more rounded “totality.” It would be inappropriate, however, to give a figure such as General Scharnhorst ideal Greek attire, since his portrait should depict the specific circumstances of his modern military life.⁹³

These last remarks of Hegel might seem somewhat fussy, and even a little quaint. They are important, however, because they bear witness to his view that, although romantic sculpture *can* successfully take over aspects of ideal, classical Greek sculpture, it is not required to do so and, indeed, in many circumstances *should not do so*. Hegel states explicitly that modern sculptors should avoid any “affected,” “false,” and “unintelligent enthusiasm [*Eifer*]” for ideal beauty.⁹⁴ This implies that it is perfectly right and proper for modern sculpture to employ bodily stances, textures of flesh, and modes of clothing that are *not classically ideal*. Indeed, Hegel notes, even the Greeks did not impose ideal forms on the “nonideal” (*VAB* 224).

For Hegel, the first and highest vocation of sculpture is to create statues that embody the “classical form of the ideal” (*VA* 2:460/*A* 2:790). This vocation is fulfilled by Greek art of the fifth and fourth centuries (from Polykleitos and Pheidias to Praxiteles). It is, however, perfectly appropriate—indeed logically and historically necessary—for sculpture to *depart from* that classical ideal. It does so by seeking to please in a somewhat mannered way (as in Hellenistic art) or by depicting the broken body of Christ, the love and grief of the Virgin Mary, or the contingencies of everyday life (as in romantic art). In so doing, Hegel suggests, sculpture may *or may not* preserve significant aspects of classical ideal beauty. In either case, it becomes both more dramatic and more painterly (and indeed, embraces portraiture). This movement toward other arts is a move away from what is properly *sculptural*: the depiction of idealized independent individuals in inactive repose. It is, however, a movement that is *wholly proper to sculpture*. Sculpture’s very nature, therefore, is to embody and then go beyond its own highest ideal.⁹⁵

Twentieth-Century Sculpture

The most radical break with the classical ideal occurred in the early twentieth century. Matisse, Picasso, and Brancusi, among others, pushed sculpture further and further away from the idealized anatomical correctness that characterized classical Greek and Renaissance sculpture, and Constructivists such as Tatlin eventually produced completely abstract, non-figurative constructions.⁹⁶ In my view, however, Hegel would not have con-

sidered this progressive “liberation” of sculpture from the constraints of the figurative tradition to be an appropriate further development of sculpture. He would, I think, have regarded it as the *regression* of sculpture to its preclassical, “symbolic” form, indeed to the most primitive mode thereof in which it is not yet clearly distinguished from architecture. This does not necessarily mean that Hegel would have dismissed twentieth-century avant-garde sculpture out of hand: after all, he readily acknowledges that ancient “architectural” sculpture can “excite the heart,” provoke “astonishment,” and awaken a world of imaginative ideas in the viewer, and he might have said something similar about modern art.⁹⁷ Yet Hegel understood “architectural” sculpture to belong to art’s past, not to its future. In his view, sculpture quite properly develops in a more painterly and dramatic direction, but it should not revert to being architectural and symbolic.

This is not the place in which to provide a detailed “Hegelian” interpretation of twentieth-century sculpture. I will, however, suggest a few ways in which certain strands of such sculpture might be considered architectural and symbolic from a Hegelian perspective.⁹⁸

Sculpture and architecture, in Hegel’s view, were initially fused together in an art that he calls “independent, symbolic architecture” (VA 2:272/A 2:635). Nonarchitectural symbolic sculpture is to be found in ancient Egypt in traditional, often finely sculpted figures with their arms pressed firmly to their sides and their gaze directed forward.⁹⁹ Symbolic architecture, by contrast, is exemplified by the colossal Egyptian memnons, as well by obelisks and phallic columns.¹⁰⁰ Such works of art are not clearly defined sculptures that have simply been used to adorn temples or churches (such as the pedimental sculptures from the Parthenon); rather, they are constructions that are neither truly sculptural nor truly architectural but exhibit elements of both arts (see VAB 193).

Symbolic architecture, Hegel tells us, is simply the “forming” (*Bilden*) of inorganic material into three-dimensional structures with symbolic meaning and significance (PK 177–78). It does not provide an enclosure for a sculpted god or housing for people—and so is not fully architectural—but stands as an independent “end in itself” (VAB 196). It is nothing but a meaningful material construction.

Such works are *architectural* insofar as they have been given a form that is not fully organic—that is, fully human, animal, or plantlike—but one that has been “externally” constructed (PK 177). They constitute, therefore, what Hegel calls “inorganic sculpture” (VA 2:270/A 2:633; VPK 210). In some cases—for example, towers and obelisks—the form can be highly regular, symmetrical, and geometric. In other cases—for example, memnons and sphinxes—the figures are recognizably, though only mini-

mally, organic. The architectural (as opposed to sculptural) character of the latter is often enhanced by the fact that they are extended into “massive and colossal constructions” or placed next to one another in rows (VA 2:275, 298/A 2:637, 656).

The *sculptural* character of symbolic architecture lies in part in the fact that its creations are independently significant and do not serve to house images of the gods or their worshippers (VA 2:269/A 2:632). (Even when arranged in rows, sphinxes do not lose this sculptural independence, since they do not themselves become enclosures for the gods.) Symbolic architecture also approaches sculpture insofar as its form is organic. Memnons, sphinxes, and phallic columns and lingams that express “the universal force of life in nature” and the “productive energy of procreation” are thus more sculptural, in Hegel’s view, than towers and obelisks (VA 2:275, 279/A 2:637, 641).

Works of symbolic architecture (or “inorganic sculpture”) fall short of genuine sculpture, however, because they do not present us with the material shape—the concrete physical embodiment—of spiritual freedom.¹⁰¹ Despite their “sculptural” independence, therefore, such works are primarily “architectural” creations because they are not unequivocally *figurative* but are three-dimensional material *constructions* that are, to a greater or lesser degree, abstract.

In contrast to the work of Matisse, Picasso, or Brancusi, ancient symbolic architecture often served a distinctive religious or nation-building function.¹⁰² Nonetheless, certain features of symbolic architecture, as identified by Hegel, do seem to characterize some twentieth-century sculpture. Andrew Causey describes the sculpture of David Smith, especially his stainless steel *Cubi XXVII* (1965), as “increasingly architectural”; but what he understands by “architecture” is “something entered and encompassing,” that is, architecture in the full sense.¹⁰³ Modern sculpture approaches the condition of “independent, symbolic architecture,” however, as soon as it moves away from the natural shape of human freedom and begins to exhibit a wholly *invented* and *constructed* spatial coherence, even though it does not encompass or house anything.

In a work such as Degas’ *Dancer Fastening the String of Her Tights* (1882–95), what we encounter—in the words of William Tucker—is “sculpture as figure, as essentially our own physical structure realized outside ourselves.” With Matisse, by contrast, “proportions and distortion . . . are developed not in terms of a physical empathy with the spectator, of muscular expression, but in terms solely of an aesthetic ordering, a relation of parts.” What we find are simply “‘things in themselves’: in Matisse’s much-used expression, ‘architecture.’” Matisse may thus be regarded as the first truly modern sculptor because even though he remains an apparently “figurative” artist, he claims for himself “total freedom to develop

the sculpture in volume and disposition *according to his own sense of the architecture of the parts.*"¹⁰⁴

Modern sculpture moves further in the direction of symbolic architecture when—with Tatlin—it abandons organic (indeed, any recognizable) figure altogether and creates abstract, "inorganic" constructions in which what is of interest is simply the organization of material in space. In Hegelian terms, such works do not directly embody concrete human freedom or organic life, but are invented, constructed shapes that simply "stimulate thought . . . and arouse general ideas" in a manner not unlike the symbolic constructions of the ancient world (VA 2:273/A 2:636).

Many other modern sculptures move toward symbolic architecture in various ways. With a work such as Picasso's *Musical Instrument* (1914), for example, there is opened up "the possibility of the free arrangement of parts to create an expressive whole," even though the work remains loosely representational.¹⁰⁵ Some creations, especially public sculptures, are monumental works or abstract "installations"; Brancusi's *Endless Column* (1937) brings to mind the obelisks of the ancient world, while his *Adam and Eve* (1921) is a "columnar carving in which symbols of generation and fecundity are 'stylized' into precise geometric forms"; and Henry Moore's sculpture fuses the organic and the inorganic by blending the female form with shapes abstracted from the natural landscape.¹⁰⁶

Not all twentieth-century sculpture approaches the condition of symbolic architecture. Yet many modern works do. Such works may well retain the characteristic independence of sculpture, but they are "architectural" to the extent that they are more or less abstract *constructions* that have been detached from the concrete expression of human freedom. From a Hegelian point of view, therefore, these works leave behind what is properly sculptural more radically than any other Western sculpture before them.

As we have seen, it is in the nature of sculpture to depart from its own pure ideal of quiet grandeur and inactive repose and become increasingly dramatic and painterly. In so doing, however, its task remains that of *giving shape to human freedom, character, and life* (and thereby creating works of beauty). For this reason—and not for the sake of accurately "imitating" nature—sculpture should still be clearly and faithfully figurative. This is the case even when sculpture becomes *thoroughly nonclassical and nonideal*. Twentieth-century sculpture undoubtedly has many virtues that Hegel would have to acknowledge: it can be restful, thought-provoking, and elegantly shaped. Insofar as it turns its back on the task of sculpting concrete human individuals and approaches the condition of symbolic architecture, however, such sculpture abandons what Hegel considers to be the very purpose of sculpture itself.

The irony is that much modern sculpture abandons its distinctive

purpose as a consequence of seeking to *emancipate* itself from the alleged constraints of figurative art and become more purely “sculptural.”¹⁰⁷ Modern sculptors direct much of their energy toward creating abstract, three-dimensional constructions with their own distinctive, invented coherence. In so doing they often claim to be freeing themselves from the extraneous demands of image-making to concentrate on what Read considers to be the “virtues proper to the art of sculpture—sensibility to volume and mass, the interplay of hollows and protuberances, the rhythmical articulation of planes and contours.”¹⁰⁸ In Hegel’s view, however, to move away from depicting free human individuality and toward creating abstract spatial constructions is actually to move away from sculpture and back toward symbolic architecture: for symbolic architecture involves merely constructing something significant, whereas true sculpture creates shapes *that explicitly embody human spiritual freedom*.¹⁰⁹

Hegel’s theory of sculpture thus not only helps us appreciate what is so magnificent about classical Greek sculpture. It also shows us that in seeking greater sculptural “freedom” in abstraction, modern artists in fact lose sight of the very purpose of sculpture as an art. Their “freedom” is thus itself revealed to be abstract, for it lacks the understanding that what is required of the sculptor in modernity is not visual abstractness but concreteness and humanity.

Notes

1. See J. J. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972).

2. H. Read, *Modern Sculpture: A Concise History* (1964; London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 18.

3. See, for example, G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1826), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert, J. I. Kwon, and K. Berr (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 51. (Hereafter cited as *PK*.)

4. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 1:21; and G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 1:7: “the *Divine*, the deepest interests of mankind.” Further references to this edition and this translation of Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics will be given in the following form: VA 1:21/A 1:7 (with the German text cited first). I have occasionally altered Knox’s translation.

5. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 54–55; and S. Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History* (1991; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 4–25.

6. See Hegel, VA 1:389–92/A 1:299–302.

7. See, for example, Hegel, PK 73.

8. See Hegel, VA 1:151/A 1:111; and G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. H. Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 49. (Hereafter cited as VAB.)

9. Hegel, PK 197.

10. See Hegel, VA 2:400/A 2:740–41.

11. Hegel, VA 2:364–65/A 2:712. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik* (1826), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert and B. Collenberg-Plotnikov (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004), 172; and G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2003), 232–33. (These texts are hereafter cited as PKA and VPK, respectively.)

12. For an account of Hegel's theory of painting, see S. Houlgate, "Hegel and the Art of Painting," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. W. Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 61–82.

13. On the *Dresden Zeus*, see Hegel, VAB 227; and VA 2:427/A 2:762. For a brief account of Hegel's travels to see works of art at first hand, see Houlgate, "Hegel and the Art of Painting," 77–79n9. For images of the three statues mentioned here, see J. Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), figs. 69, 202, 228. Hegel visited Dresden in 1820, 1821, and 1824, and in September 1821 he specifically reports seeing antiquities by torchlight in the city; see G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 610. At that time the following statues (besides the *Dresden Zeus*) were to be seen in the Japanese Palace: *Satyr and Hermaphrodite*, the *Large and Small Herculean Goddesses*, *Athena Lemnia*, the *Dresden Boy*, *Eros and Psyche*, *Pouring Satyr*, the *Dresden Athlete*, and the *Dresden Artemis*. For images of these statues, see <http://www.skd-dresden.de/de/index.html>; R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture: A Handbook* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), fig. 52 (*Dresden Athlete*); and J. Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Late Classical Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), fig. 84 (*Dresden Artemis*). Plaster casts of the following works (among others) were to be seen in the Stable (Johanneum): *Apollino*, *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Borghese Gladiator*, *Laocoön*, *Niobe and Her Children* (busts and heads only), *Spinario*, *Venus de' Medici*, and the *Cnidian Aphrodite*. For images of these works, see F. Haskell and N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 147, 149, 223, 245, 275–77, 309, 327, 331. I am extremely grateful to Kordelia Knoll at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden for information about the sculptures and casts Hegel could have seen on his visits to the city. Among the works that Hegel might have seen in the Louvre (besides the *Athena Velletri*) are the following: *Apollo Sauroktonos*, *Diane Chasseresse*, *Artemis of Gabii*, *Faun with Pipes*, *Hermaphrodite*, and *Silenus with the Infant Bacchus*; see Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 151, 197, 199, 213, 234, 306.

14. Hegel, PKA 172–73. The phrase "tranquil grandeur" is, of course, taken from Winckelmann. See J. J. Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, ed. L. Uhlig (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1969), 20, where the predominant characteristic of Greek sculpture is said to be "a noble simplicity and a tranquil grandeur" (*eine edle Einfalt und eine stille Grösse*).

15. See Hegel, VA 2:357/A 2:706 ("spirit immersed in the body"); VPK 248; and J. Kaminsky, *Hegel on Art* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1962), 74.

16. See B. F. Cook, *The Elgin Marbles* (1984; London: British Museum, 1997), 64; and G. Duby and J.-L. Daval, eds., *Sculpture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cologne: Taschen, 2002), 10, 735.

17. Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke*, 20.

18. See Hegel, VPK 229, where sound is described as "the sublating [*Aufheben*] of materiality."

19. See Hegel, VA 2:302–3, 346/A 2:660, 696.

20. See Hegel, VAB 208–9; and PK 69: "in sculpture there is the organic figuring of matter."

21. See Hegel, VA 2:366, 404/A 2:713, 744; VPK 221, 234; PKA 171; and Kaminsky, *Hegel on Art*, 71–72.

22. Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 18.

23. See Hegel, VA 2:381/A 2:726; and PK 192.

24. See, for example, Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 69.

25. See Hegel, VPK 229.

26. Hegel, VA 2:428/A 2:763. This is true, for example, of the *Diane Chasseresse* (although her gaze is directed to the side, not to the front). It is not true, however, of the *Diana Gabii* (or *Artemis of Gabii*), who stands at rest. Hegel could have seen both works on his visit to Paris in 1827. See Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 197, 199.

27. Hegel, VA 2:433/A 2:768. See Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 245, 274–79.

28. See Hegel, VPK 229: "here spirit is presented as it is [*wie er ist*]," 231, 233.

29. See Hegel, PKA 172–73. See also S. Bungay, *Beauty and Truth: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 109; and R. Winfield, "The Classical Nude and the Limits of Sculpture," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 221 (2002): 445.

30. See Hegel, VA 2:358–59, 439/A 2:706–7, 773; PK 193–94; and PKA 172–73. On polychromy in Greek sculpture, see N. Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 76–77.

31. Hegel, VA 2:358/A 2:706; PK 193; PKA 156.

32. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 148.

33. J. G. Herder, *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream*, ed. and trans. J. Gaiger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 50, 64, 90.

34. See Hegel, PK 199, 286n223; PKA 176; VA 2:380/A 2:725; and Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, 610.

35. See Hegel, VAB 216; VPK 239; and Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 53.

36. Hegel, VAB 219; VA 2:392/A 2:734; and Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 176.

37. Hegel, VA 2:388/A 2:731; VAB 209; and VPK 242.

38. Hegel concedes that there are ancient Greek statues that are not completely blind, even without colored eyes, but "in which the eye looks at something

specific" (Hegel, VA 2:390–91/A 2:733; VPK 242). In the statue of *Silenus with the Infant Bacchus*—the most famous copy of which is in the Louvre and a further copy of which Hegel saw in Munich in 1815—Silenus looks down affectionately at the young Bacchus whom he is cradling in his arms, and Hegel acknowledges that Silenus's "smile is soulfully expressed." He maintains, however, that "even here the eye is not seeing." The profound intimacy produced in painting by the exchange of looks is thus—quite properly—missing from this otherwise touchingly intimate statue. (See O. Pöggeler, ed., *Hegel in Berlin: Preussische Kulturpolitik und idealistische Ästhetik: Zum 150. Todestag des Philosophen* [Berlin: Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1981], 224.) *Silenus with the Infant Bacchus* (or rather, the original on which the copies are based) is a Hellenistic sculpture and thus dates from a time in which the pure ideal of sculptural beauty was on the wane. In truly ideal, classical sculpture, the individuals portrayed are much more clearly unseeing, as befits the nature of sculpture: "The real statues of the gods in their simple situations are not presented with a turning of the eye and a look in some specific direction" (Hegel, VA 2:390–91/A 2:733)—a feature that we can see more clearly than the Greeks themselves, since we see such statues (or more often their Roman copies) without painted or jewel-encrusted eyes.

39. See Duby and Daval, eds., *Sculpture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, 1081.

40. Herder, *Sculpture*, 47.

41. See Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 60.

42. Hegel, PK 198; PKA 175. In describing the Lapith in metope 27 from the Parthenon, J. J. Pollitt uses similar vocabulary: "The muscles of his lean torso are formed not by lines but by a subtle undulation of the surface which is defined by shadows." See J. J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 83.

43. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 217, 220. Winckelmann is building on comments by Pliny the Elder; see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History: A Selection*, trans. J. F. Healy (1991; London: Penguin Books, 2004), 315–16.

44. Hegel, VA 2:420/A 2:756. See Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 152, 165. Pollitt maintains that later Hellenistic "baroque" art, in contrast to classical sculpture, is characterized by "restlessness of surface." See J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 111.

45. Hegel, VA 2:404–5/A 2:744; see also VAB 222; and PK 196–97.

46. See, for example, Hegel, VPK 244–45.

47. Hegel, PKA 175; VA 2:408/A 2:747. See also Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 56: "In most female figures of the classical period drapery is subordinated to the structure of the body and arranged in harmonious parallel folds which serve to model the form of the body." Pollitt notes that in the Hellenistic *Anzio Girl*, by contrast, "the drapery is massive and tends to be arranged in independent forms which conflict with and obscure the structure of the body."

48. Hegel, VAB 225. See Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 202. On p. 228 Winckelmann accuses Bernini of single-handedly ruining art in the modern world. When Hegel mentions Bernini by name in his 1821 lectures on aesthetics, there is no obvious hostility; see Hegel, VAB 107.

49. See Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke*, 19;

Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 188–89; and Herder, *Sculpture*, 50–51.

50. See Cook, *Elgin Marbles*, 65; Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period*, fig. 139; and Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Late Classical Period*, fig. 218.5.

51. See Bungay, *Beauty and Truth*, 117.

52. Hegel, VA 2:383/A 2:727. See also Hegel, VPK 240–41; and Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 174–75.

53. Hegel, VAB 237. See Winfield, “Classical Nude and the Limits of Sculpture,” 457. Kenneth Clark is remarkably close to Hegel when he writes: “This perfection of symmetry by balance and compensation is the essence of classical art. A figure may have within itself the rhythms of movement, but yet always comes to rest at its true centre.” Clark sees this exemplified above all by the work of Polykleitos. See K. Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), 33.

54. See Hegel, VAB 150, 210; VPK 233; and PK 151, 153.

55. See Hegel, VAB 159: “In the calm of sculpture beauty has its highest presentation.”

56. For information about the works that Hegel could have seen (or did see) on his travels, see notes 13 and 38 above.

57. Hegel, VA 1:264/A 1:202. For photographs of the two principal versions of the *Cnidian Aphrodite*—“Colonna” and “Belvedere”—both of which were well known at the time Hegel was lecturing, see M. Beard and J. Henderson, *Classical Art from Greece to Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 126.

58. See Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 151, 199; and note 26 above.

59. Hegel, VA 1:264–65, 2:432/A 1:202, 2:767. See Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 201, 306, 309; and Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period*, fig. 184. It was not until 1863 that Polykleitos’s *Doryphoros* was recognized in a marble copy which had been excavated at Pompeii in the eighteenth century. So even if Hegel saw a cast of this statue, he would not have known that it was a copy of the *Doryphoros*; see Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 118; and A. Borbein, “Polykleitos,” in *Personal Styles in Greek Sculpture*, ed. O. Palagia and J. J. Pollitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66–67. For a Hellenistic “low-life” version of Polykleitos’s knucklebone players, or *Astragalizontes*, see Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture*, fig. 173 (see also p. 136).

60. Hegel, VA 2:433/A 2:768. See also Hegel, VAB 228–29; PKA 180; and Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 137–38.

61. Hegel, VA 2:434/A 2:769. See also Hegel, VAB 229; and Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 167, 324–25.

62. See, for example, Hegel, VA 2:436/A 2:771.

63. In so doing ideal sculpture appears to be the perfect embodiment of the “concept.” In fact, however, it is only the imperfect embodiment of the concept, for it negates itself in such a way that it *loses* much of its ideal character, whereas the concept “is not dragged into the process of becoming, but *continues* itself through that process undisturbed and possesses the power of unalterable, undying self-preservation.” See G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1999), 602.

64. See Kaminsky, *Hegel on Art*, 82.

65. Hegel, VAB 226. On the religious function of Greek sculpture, see Duby and Daval, eds., *Sculpture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, 26–27; and Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture*, 43–53, 84.

66. See Hegel, VA 1:21/A 1:7: “the *Divine*, the deepest interests of mankind.”

67. Hegel, VA 2:424/A 2:759.

68. See Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Late Classical Period*, fig. 71.

69. Hegel, VA 2:422, 381/A 2:758, 726. See Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture*, 16–18.

70. See Hegel, PKA 172; and Pöggeler, ed., *Hegel in Berlin*, 206.

71. See Hegel, VAB 210, 214; and PK 199.

72. Hegel, VAB 212; VPK 237; and PKA 157.

73. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece*, 36, 38–41. On the “archaic smile,” see J. Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Archaic Period* (1978; London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 66, 86. Hegel appears to have no clear conception of “early classical” (as opposed to high or late classical) Greek style, but he is aware of the pedimental statues from the temple of Aphaia on Aegina, some of which—from the east pediment—seem to mark the transition from the archaic to the early classical style. Hegel notes of the Aegina sculptures that “the whole body, except the head, witnesses to the truest treatment and imitation of nature.” He did not, however, see these works himself but learned of them through reports by the sculptor and restorer J. M. von Wagner. They were found in 1811 and purchased by King Ludwig I of Bavaria, but they were not displayed in Munich until 1828, thirteen years after Hegel visited the city. See Hegel, VA 2:454–55/A 2:785–86; VAB 213; VPK 237–38, 369; Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece*, 18–20; and Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Archaic Period*, 156. At one point in the 1821 lectures on aesthetics, the sculptures from Aegina appear to be confused with the pedimental statues from the Parthenon, since Hegel includes among the former the famous figure of the river god, *Ilissos*; see Hegel, VAB 190; and Cook, *Elgin Marbles*, 57.

74. Hegel, VA 2:376, 380/A 2:722, 725; see also VPK 237.

75. See Hegel, VAB 230 (*edle Naivetät*); and PKA 173 (*stille Grösse*). Winckelmann talks of “noble simplicity” (*edle Einfalt*) and “tranquil grandeur” in *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke*, 20.

76. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 149.

77. Hegel, VAB 228. See also Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece*, in which the high classical period is described as “aloof” (48, 83).

78. For Hegel’s account of “sublime” Islamic and Judaic poetry, see VA 1:473–85/A 1:368–77. For Kant’s account of the sublime, see I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 128–49 (sections 23–29).

79. See Hegel, VA 2:379/A 2:724: “The still rather solid severity [*Strenge*] of its style constitutes real greatness and sublimity of the ideal.”

80. Hegel, VA 2:378–79/A 2:724. See also Hegel, PK 198; PKA 176; and Cook, *Elgin Marbles*, 57. I am grateful to Kordelia Knoll for information about casts of the Elgin Marbles in Dresden. Casts of the marbles reached Göttingen in 1830, a year before Hegel died, but he could not have seen them; see Virtuelles

Antiken Museum Göttingen, at http://viamus.uni-goettingen.de/fr/sammlung/ad_geschichte.

81. See Hegel, VA 2:379, 443/A 2:724, 776; Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 207; and Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Late Classical Period*, 53, 56.

82. Hegel, VA 2:421/A 2:758. See, for example, Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Late Classical Period*, fig. 68 (*Dionysus* [Richelieu type]); and Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 147 (*Apollino*).

83. Hegel, VA 2:457/A 2:788. See A. Ajootian, “Praxiteles,” in *Personal Styles in Greek Sculpture*, 103: “The power to draw spectators into the world of the sculpture may have been one of the aesthetic possibilities explored by Praxiteles.”

84. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 207, 225; and Hegel, VAB 230.

85. Hegel, VAB 191. Pollitt points to what he calls the “theatrical mentality” of Hellenistic artists, who felt obliged “to put on a good show,” and Mark Fullerton considers the concern with “visual effects” to be characteristic of much fourth-century sculpture and painting. See Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 4–7; and M. D. Fullerton, *Greek Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 124.

86. See Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 47; and Pliny the Elder, *Natural History: A Selection*, 316.

87. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 47–48. See also Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture*, 52.

88. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 364.

89. Hegel, VA 2:431/A 2:766; VAB 191. See also Pöggeler, *Hegel in Berlin*, 223; and Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 149, 327.

90. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 326.

91. Hegel does not note that Hellenistic art also moves in the direction of realism and portraiture. He does point out, however, that Roman sculpture moves in this direction. See Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 141–42; and Hegel, VA 2:458/A 2:788.

92. See Hegel, VA 2:458–59/A 2:788–89.

93. See Hegel, VAB 223 (Washington); and PKA 175 (Scharnhorst). The statue of Scharnhorst by C. D. Rauch—in modern military dress (with cape)—was unveiled in Berlin in 1822; see Pöggeler, *Hegel in Berlin*, 226. In the early nineteenth century Washington was often portrayed in Neoclassical attire. Perhaps the most famous example of such work is the statue by Horatio Greenough, completed in 1840 (nine years after Hegel’s death). This once stood in the U.S. Capitol and is now in the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

94. See Hegel, VA 2:410/A 2:749; VAB 223; VPK 245, and PK 198.

95. In becoming more painterly, however, sculpture does not cease being *sculpture*: the expression of human freedom in *shape* alone. Color does not, therefore, now become part of its distinctive expressive repertoire.

96. Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 90.

97. See Hegel, VPK 216; and VA 2:273–74/A 2:636.

98. A more thorough “Hegelian” interpretation of twentieth-century sculpture would have to take account of the fact that many modern artists, including

Matisse and Picasso, were directly influenced by “symbolic” sculpture from, for example, Africa (see Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 50–51). Such sculpture could perhaps be said to fall somewhere between symbolic architecture (such as memnons and phallic columns) and the fine, nonarchitectural, symbolic sculpture found in Egypt. In this essay, however, my concern is solely to highlight a broad affinity between modern sculpture and symbolic architecture.

99. See J. Malek, *Egyptian Art* (London: Phaidon, 1999), 106, 361.

100. See Hegel, VA 2:279–82, 449–50/A 2:641–43, 782; and Malek, *Egyptian Art*, 226–27 (Memnon Colossi of Amenhotep III).

101. See Hegel, VA 2:269/A 2:632.

102. Hegel, VA 2:275/A 2:637

103. A. Causey, *Sculpture Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6, 119.

104. W. Tucker, *The Language of Sculpture* (1974; London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 10, 12, 87, 91 (my emphasis in last quotation).

105. Tucker, *Language of Sculpture*, 60.

106. See Tucker, *Language of Sculpture*, 140; Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 51, 207; and Duby and Daval, eds., *Sculpture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, 1040. Read’s description of Brancusi’s *Adam and Eve* should be read together with Hegel’s claim that symbolic architecture often “takes its starting point more or less from . . . organic formations” but, as it develops, “must modify organic forms mathematically into regularity”; see Hegel, VA 2:298/A 2:656.

107. There is a further irony in the fact that the painter Cézanne arguably had more influence on the development of modern sculpture—and on its progressive “emancipation” from figurative art—than previous sculptors (including Rodin). See Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 10.

108. Read, *Modern Sculpture*, 18.

109. See Hegel, VA 2:269–70/A 2:632–33.

Carnation and the Eccentricity of Painting

John Sallis

As to color it seems that Hegel never wavered. From the time of the first cycle of lectures he gave on aesthetics, there is remarkable constancy regarding color, regarding the decisiveness of color for painting. Throughout the entire Berlin period, throughout the four cycles of lectures he presented on aesthetics (1820–21, 1823, 1826, 1828–29), Hegel seems never to have faltered in his view that painting is little else than a matter of color.¹

Always then he is on the verge of saying: color and nothing but color—that painting is color and nothing but color.

In the first lecture cycle Hegel declares that color is what “first genuinely makes a painter a painter.”² In the second cycle he is recorded to have said without qualification: “Color is the element of painting.”³ And in the text that H. G. Hotho composed on the basis of various sources from the various cycles, Hegel is—posthumously—made to say: “It is therefore color, coloring, that makes a painter a painter.”⁴ So then, not just color (*Farbe*) but also, even primarily, coloring (*Kolorit*) is what constitutes painting, is what makes it painting and makes the painter a painter.

Hegel is only slightly less constant about the various consequences of his rigorous orientation of painting to color, about the manifold transformation of the very determination of painting that is brought about by—or at least is coordinate with—his insistence on the all-decisiveness of color and coloring.

The decisiveness of color is especially consequential as regards form and as regards the drawing (*Zeichnung*) that, independently of color, could inscribe form. Hegel’s position is that what counts for painting, what accounts almost entirely for it, is not form and drawing but color and coloring. Hegel could hardly have inverted more thoroughly the order laid out in the *Critique of Judgment*. Kant says explicitly that “in painting, . . . drawing [*Zeichnung*] is what is essential”; and that, in drawing, what counts for taste is “what we like because of its form [*was durch seine Form gefällt*].” Color, on the other hand, belongs to mere charm and can at best serve

only “to make the form intuitable more precisely, determinately, and completely.” Color cannot make an object beautiful but rather is usually severely restricted by “the requirement of beautiful form.”⁵

Hegel’s inversion of this order has the effect, at least from a Kantian perspective, of reorienting painting to sensation, of granting to sense as such a constitutive function in painting and hence an indispensable role in the judgment of taste that would assess the beauty of a painting. To be sure, Kant opens, even if cautiously, the possibility of according such a function and role to sensation, and he opens it at two different levels of analysis. In the one instance, this possibility depends on the assumption that in sense perception there is not only sense reception but also, through a reflection intrinsic to sense, an apprehension of the form constituted by the regular play of sensations. In this instance, color would not be a congeries of mere sensations but, says Kant, would “already be the formal determination of the unity of a manifold of these.”⁶ In the other instance, this possibility would be linked to the purity of a simple kind of sensation, to its being uniform and uninterrupted by any other sensation. This very purity would constitute a formal moment within—and yet distinct from—the sensible as such. Such purity, says Kant, “pertains only to form, because there we can abstract from the quality of the kind of sensation in question (as to which color . . . is presented).” Kant concludes that it is because of this moment that “all simple colors, insofar as they are pure, are considered beautiful.”⁷ Thus, in both instances Kant’s strategy is the same: sense can be regarded as pertinent to beauty only insofar as within sense there is a purely formal moment distinguishable from sense as such, from the mere sense in sense. This same strategy, much more elaborated, is in play in the main analysis of judgments of taste: though with respect to the object of such judgment what is apprehended is sensible, it is a formal sensible, a formal aspect within the sensible presentation of the object; and its apprehension requires accordingly not just sense but also, even primarily, imagination. It is this formal sensible, this sensible form distinguishable from the mere sense in sense, that in the case of something truly beautiful can be brought to display, through the play of imagination, a certain homology with understanding. This homology serves, then, to confirm that this moment of sensible form is independent of the mere sense in sense.

Even when, as on a crystal clear winter day, one marvels at the beauty of the sky and lets one’s vision be utterly absorbed in its inexpressible blueness, one would have to grant that the beauty of the sky is completely independent of its color, that as regards its beauty it matters not at all that it is blue. It would be no different if one were enraptured by the glorious colors of a painting. As far as the beauty of the painting is concerned, the

colors as such—in distinction from the formal moments that can be disengaged from them—would make no difference.

For Hegel, on the other hand, color makes all the difference, color in its specificity as red, blue, yellow, and so on, and in its virtual particularity in the almost unlimited differentiation of shades. These differences are of such subtlety and value and of such decisiveness for painting that they make all the difference. There is nothing in painting that is not produced by color and coloring: “Shape, distance, boundaries, contours, in short all the spatial relations and differences of appearing in space are produced [*hervorgebracht*] in painting only by color” (*Ak* 2:186–87/*A* 2:810). Hegel marvels at what color can achieve, and calls it “incredible [*unglaublich*].” Consider, for example, two men with all the differences between them, each of them a distinct totality in body and in mind: “and yet in a painting this entire difference is reduced to a difference of colors.” It is incredible indeed: “Here a color stops and another begins, and by this means everything is there: form, distance, play of features, expression, the most sensible [*das Sinnlichste*] and the most spiritual” (*Ak* 2:187/*A* 2:810).

Everything is there, everything from the most sensible to the most spiritual, from the most sensible of the sensible to the most intelligible of the intelligible. Yet everything whatsoever, across this space of all spaces, is there by means of something eminently sensible, irreducibly sensible.

In particular, form is there, already there, by means of color. Mere coloring will have brought it forth, virtually without need of the drawing that, in drawing as such, would inscribe it.

Everything is there by means of color; that is, color is set there (through coloring), and then, simply as a result, without any further ado, everything else is there, the entire visible spectacle. Everything—color and then everything else—is there. Everything is there in the painting. But what is this *there* of the painting? How, in what manner, is everything there? What is the sense of this presence of sense?

Hegel expresses this sense in a single word, *scheinen*. It is one of the most difficult words to translate in Hegel’s text, because Hegel’s usage of the word is sensitive to its range of different semantic registers. Though this word, *scheinen* (and *Schein*), is not matched in the range of its meanings by “shine” and “shining,” there is every reason to adopt this translation and to tolerate the difference while gradually letting the sense of “shine” expand and accommodate itself to that of *scheinen*. At a certain level there is an abysmality that cannot be avoided, for the sense that is to be expressed in the word *scheinen* is one that turns, that is twisted, in the differentiation intrinsic to the word “sense.” It is a sense that works against sense (against the hegemony of signification) for the sake of sense (the irreducibly sensible). Not surprisingly, Hegel describes it as “in the middle

between the immediate sensible and ideal thought" (*Ak* 1:48/*A* 1:38). But what is more directly important in rendering *scheinen* and *Schein* as "shine" and "shining" is to avoid identifying *Schein* with *Illusion*. With this identification, in force in Kant's analysis of *transzendentaler Schein*, Hegel breaks decisively, restoring to the word its broad range of senses from illusion to shining to appearance; or rather, he moves from this spread of senses to a precise philosophical determination.⁸

In a painting, sense is present otherwise than in nature. Hegel's analysis of such sensible presence is already launched in the introduction to the *Aesthetics*; at this stage the analysis is completely general and thus pertains to the presence of the sensible in all the arts. Hegel begins with the most global differentiation: what is sensible in a work of art is there "only insofar as it is for the human spirit, but not insofar as it exists as sensible for itself" (*Ak* 1:46/*A* 1:36). The presence of what is sensible in a work of art is a presence to spirit, not an independent presence such as things have—or at least are commonly taken to have—in nature. Thus, to determine the sense in which the sensible is present in a work of art, there is required an analysis and differentiation of the various ways in which the sensible can be related to the human spirit, of the ways in which it can *be for* the human spirit. This being-for-spirit is the first, most general determination of the sense of the sensible in art.

Hegel's ensuing analysis shows that the sensible can be related to spirit in various ways. The poorest way is that of mere sensible apprehension, as when, without thinking, one merely listens here and looks around there. For the most part, however, a spiritual being does not simply apprehend the world but also relates itself to things through desire, makes them objects of desire in which, as they are used or consumed, this being achieves a certain self-realization and self-satisfaction. Hegel notes especially that desire requires the things themselves in their sensibly concrete existence, not merely the superficial shining (*den oberflächlichen Schein*) of things. Desire is not satisfied by a mere picture of the animal one would like to eat. And just as a work of art does not satisfy desire, so the proper relation to a work of art is other than desire. Rather than aiming to use or consume the object, one leaves it, if it is an artwork, in its independent existence; and its way of being there sensibly for spirit is such that it is only for the theoretical (not the practical) side of spirit.

Another way in which something can be for spirit is by way of the purely theoretical relation to intelligence. In such a theoretical relation to things, one aims not at consuming them but at knowing them in their universality. Intelligence goes after the universal, seeks to grasp the object in thought, in its concept. But once an object has been grasped in thought, it has thereby been transformed, has become universal. Intelligence will

have turned away from the object in its immediate individuality, as which it will be of no further concern. Then it will be the object as intelligible, not as sensible, that will be for spirit; whereas art cherishes the work of art in its immediate sensible character and does not turn it into a universal. Even in the case of the most nearly universal kind of artwork, the linguistic, poetic work, Hegel insists that it is never just a matter of language and concepts, but that there must always be a sensible presence in play, even if only in imagination (*Phantasie, inneres Vorstellen* [see *Ak* 2:331–34/*A* 2:964–67]).

Sensible presence is required in a work of art, is required of a work of art. What is not required is the concrete materiality and empirical completeness that desire, and even mere apprehension, it seems, would demand. Now, in the sphere of art, a mere picture of the animal, which otherwise one would want to eat, completely suffices, even if the picture is of an animal that does not or could not exist, even if it is a picture of an animal that one would never or could never desire to consume. In the artwork the sensible must indeed be present, as, specifically in painting, color and then everything else is sensibly present. And yet this presence is sensible without being material. Hegel expresses its distinctive character, its distinctive presence, in terms of how it is to appear (*erscheinen*), in terms of the guise in which it appears. It is “to appear only as a surface [*Oberfläche*] and a shining of the sensible [*Schein des Sinnlichen*]” (*Ak* 1:48/*A* 1:38). Surface (*Oberfläche*) has here the sense of something sensible that has been detached from materiality, something that, as Hegel adds, “is liberated from the scaffolding of its mere materiality.”⁹ Thus liberated, what appears is not the sensible aspect of something materially existent but rather the shining of the sensible, of a sensible aspect that is, however, not an aspect of a material existent present with it. The shining appears (*erscheint*); it is not something other than the appearing, but rather the shining is an appearing. There is a shining forth, and in this very shining the appearance or look of something comes forth. And yet, in a sense nothing appears: it is not an appearance or look belonging to—connected to in the sense of standing out from—anything materially existent, and in this sense there is semblance, even illusion, in play in the shining. And yet, in still another sense the shining is an appearance of something, namely, of the sensible, of a sensible aspect (without that aspect being actually connected to, standing out from, anything materially existent). This sensible is what shines, indeed so much so that it is nothing other than the shining. In the artwork this sensible that shines *is* only in and as the shining. One begins to sense how the word *Schein* circulates through all its various senses (shine, look, appearance, seeming, semblance, illusion) and how all differences tend to collapse back into the shining.¹⁰

Hegel specifies that because the sensible that shines in art is liberated from materiality, it appears only as the shape, the look, or the sound

of things; that is, it appears only to sight and hearing, since the other senses all have to do with materiality in its immediacy. Art, says Hegel, “brings forth only a shadow-world of shapes, sounds, and sights,” a “sensible surface” or mere “schemata” (*Ak* 1:49/*A* 1:39). Yet what is most remarkable, especially as regards painting, is what in this context Hegel does not say. What he does not say, what he forgoes saying, is that this shadow-world consists of shadows of materially existent things or even of things that could exist materially. He does not say that the sensible surface images the surface of possibly existent things, nor that the schemata brought forth by art are schemata of such things. To be sure, he does not deny this, and yet, except for the vague reference made when he speaks of “the shape, the look, or the sound of things,” the reference beyond remains, at best, merely implicit. This fact is all the more striking if one notes the kind of reference Hegel does make: not outward to things but inward to spirit. Thus: “For these sensible shapes and tones occur in art . . . with the aim, in this shape, of affording satisfaction to higher spiritual interests, since they have the power to call forth from all the depths of consciousness an echo and a resounding in the spirit [*einen Anklang und Wiederklang im Geiste*]” (*Ak* 1:49/*A* 1:39). The reference is not from the shining to something external, something beyond it, that it would image (as in a relation of image to original), but rather to a certain imaging within, to an echo, which is a kind of sonic image, to a resounding in the depths of consciousness. To the extent that this passage declares the sensible aspect to be *of* something, it declares it to be an aspect *of spirit*; in and through the sensible aspect shining forth in art, spirit learns primarily not about things but about itself.

This very striking absence of reference to things can be taken as correlative to Hegel’s thoroughgoing critique of the conception of art as imitation (*Nachahmung*) of nature.¹¹ Even if one sets aside the purely formal character of the aim expressed in this conception (that what is already there in the external world is to be made a second time), even if one ignores the absence of any objective indication as to what is to be imitated, even then, Hegel insists, this principle that art is to imitate nature is not to be accepted. While Hegel recognizes that painting and sculpture have some relation to nature, he stresses that certain other arts quite conspicuously do not imitate nature. Hegel’s formulation leaves the cases of painting and sculpture in a certain hypothetical suspension for the sake of declaring, without qualifications, the nonmimetic character of other arts. He says:

For if we look at the various arts, it will be granted at once that, even if *painting* and *sculpture* present [*darstellen*] objects that appear [*erscheinen*] similar to natural ones or whose type is essentially drawn from nature,

on the other hand works of *architecture*, which is also one of the *fine* arts, can as little be called imitations of nature as works of *poetry* can. (Ak 1:54/A 1:45)

Yet to say that it is not the aim of artworks to imitate nature is not, Hegel grants, to sever all relations of art to nature. In all the arts, even those most conspicuously nonmimetic, there must be a certain natural basis: "Certainly it is an essential moment of a work of art to have a natural shape as its basis [*Naturgestaltung zur Grundlage*], because it presents [*darstellt*] in the form of external and therefore also natural appearance [*Erscheinung*]" (Ak 1:55/A 1:45). In this passage it is essential to note that Hegel does not say that art presents external, natural appearances or objects; art does not present—that is, imitate—nature but rather only has a certain *natural basis*, which consists in its giving to what it presents the form of external, natural appearance. To the sensible aspect that art lets shine, it gives a certain form, that of external, natural appearances, that which (also) belongs to the appearance of external, natural things. Thus it is that the painter must study what belongs to such appearance: "For painting, e.g., it is an important study to get to know and copy with precision the colors in their relation to one another, the effects of light, reflections, etc., as well as the forms and shapes of objects in their most minute nuances" (Ak 1:55/A 1:45). Yet such study is only preparation for painting, not painting itself. Though indeed painting has a natural basis, taking its form from that of external, natural appearance, what it presents is something other than external, natural objects: "Neither is the naturalness the *rule* nor is the mere imitation of external appearances as external the *aim* of art" (Ak 1:55/A 1:46).

Hegel's concept of artistic presentation is spiritual: what art presents is, not the appearance of natural things, but spirit itself, spirit to itself. And yet art is the *sensible* presentation of spirit. Art is irreducibly sensible, and this is why the painter needs, by way of preparatory studies, to become acquainted with what goes to make up the natural basis, the sensible of painting. Though, to be sure, Hegel mentions in this connection the forms and shapes of objects, what he mentions first is what has to do with color and light: the colors in their relation to one another, the effects of light, reflections, and so on. If one adds to this specification the submission of form to color—that is, Hegel's insistence that with color everything is there, including the forms and shapes of objects—then it appears that the study requisite for painters would have primarily to do with color. Even the drawing that the apprentice might learn for the sake of familiarity with forms and shapes would in painting itself be left behind for the sake of a genuinely painterly technique in which forms and shapes would not be formed independently but would emerge from color.

Finally, then, it is color that constitutes the natural basis of painting, that makes the painterly presentation irreducibly sensible. For color in its very decisiveness for painting cannot be reduced to formal moments that would be detachable from the sensible as such. This irreducibility is enforced by the primary role that Hegel accords to shining. It is in the shining of color that the irreducibly sensible basis of painting consists.

Shining lies in the middle between sensible and intelligible. It even establishes the center, which corresponds on the side of presentation to that marked by imagination on the side of artistic creation. Yet, in painting, presentation occurs as the shining of color: it is through the shining of color that everything is there in the painting. In other words, the presentation, centered by the role of shining (common to all arts), is bound to something—namely, color—that is not at all in the middle, not at all centered, but rather lies at the extreme. For color is eminently sensible, irreducibly sensible. In a significant sense it is the most sensible of the sensible means used in the arts. It is true that the stone used by architecture and sculpture has a heaviness and a resistance that the painter's colors do not have; but this heaviness and resistance have more to do with the materiality to which these arts remain attached than with sensibleness as such. And whereas architecture and sculpture have to bring form to bear on the sensible basis (even if, as in sculpture, the form may be prefigured in the stone), painting has only to engage with the sensible basis, to spread its colors on the canvas, and thereby everything—including form—is there.

Thus bound as it is to color, to what lies not at the center but at an extreme, painting is radically off-center. Painting is eccentric.

One will say perhaps that all the arts, as *sensible* presentations, are bound to the side of the sensible and thus are eccentric. Yet with the other arts there are specific determinations that mitigate their decenteredness. As noted already, architecture and sculpture, despite their attachment to the sensible material, have nonetheless to bring form to that material rather than, as in painting, simply letting it emerge from engagement with the sensible basis. In the case of poetry the mitigation is most striking: poetry is not even bound to a presence of sensibleness, but gets along quite well with a sensibleness that is only imagined. Music has a similar tendency insofar as tone is a vanishing moment, a sensible moment that in its very coming to be comes to be annihilated and so vanishes of itself. Already as such more ideal than really subsistent corporeality, tone, says Hegel, gives up even this ideal existence as it comes to sound (see *Ak* 2:261/*A* 2:891). Yet, if in the case of music the mitigation seems less decisive, this no doubt is linked to a peculiar inner affinity between music and painting. We shall return to this affinity.

The eccentricity of painting is also marked, if only schematically, in

the configuration that arises from the most general divisions of art articulated by Hegel at the outset. This double division of art—its division, on the one side, into the forms of art and, on the other side, into the individual arts—structures the entire *Aesthetics*. It also generates the general dynamics of the work, which is linked to the interrelation between these two sides; it is linked specifically to a certain mutual centering established between the two sides. Reference to such centering is imperative inasmuch as the very axiomatics of eccentricity prescribes that a center must be established in relation to which—that is, in noncoincidence with which—eccentricity is constituted.

There is one centering that is anterior to all others and that lays down the primary axis for all that follows. It is the centering of art as such, of art as a whole: the center of art (*der Mittelpunkt der Kunst*) is the classical form of art (*Ak* 1:413/*A* 1:427). Art as such, art as a whole, is centered in the classical form of art. Whatever art or form of art deviates from the classical form is to that extent off-center, eccentric.

But how is it that of the three forms of art—symbolic, classical, and romantic—the classical form is the one in which art as such and as a whole is centered? In the classical form of art the essence of artistic beauty is realized, the perfection of art reaches its very pinnacle. Hegel declares of classical art: “Nothing can be or become more beautiful” (*Ak* 1:498/*A* 1:517). Such beauty, such perfection, is achieved in classical art because it is precisely in this form that there is perfect unification of the spiritual and sensible moments that constitute art as such. In classical art, spirit acquires a shape entirely adequate to it. In this form of art, spirit is sensibly presented in the most complete manner possible in art as such; it is presented to the most perfect extent that is possible by way of sense. Such is precisely the determination of the classical form of art.

In the mutual centering between forms of art and individual arts, it is sculpture that Hegel centers in the classical form: sculpture, he says, “forms the center of classical art” (*Ak* 2:103/*A* 2:718). Centered in classical art, sculpture thereby also gives to classical art its center. Hegel explains how it is that sculpture and the classical form of art are so perfectly matched: “Insofar as in sculpture the spiritual inwardness . . . makes itself at home in the sensuous shape and its external material and both sides are so mutually formed that neither preponderates, sculpture acquires the *classical art-form* as its fundamental type” (*Ak* 1:90/*A* 1:85). Sculpture is perfectly matched with classical art because sculpture achieves precisely that most perfect union of spirit and sense that the very determination of the classical form of art prescribes.

At its center, as it is centered in the classical form so as also to give that form its center, sculpture is classical, not only in a structural or sys-

tematic sense but also in a historical sense: it is with classical—that is, primarily Greek—sculpture that the centering occurs. In classical Greek sculpture both the art of sculpture and the classical form of art reach perfection. Since the classical form of art is what, in turn, centers art as such and as a whole, it is in classical Greek sculpture that art as such and as a whole is centered. In a more linear, historical schema, this is to say that in classical Greek sculpture art as such reaches its pinnacle of perfection. In classical sculptures of the Greek gods, the shining of the sensible is most perfectly suited to present spirit, and spirit is accordingly sensibly presented in the highest degree possible. This is why Hegel says: “Nothing can be or become more beautiful” (*Ak* 1:498/*A* 1:517).

That sculpture is centered in the classical form of art and thus attains perfection as classical sculpture does not mean that sculpture is incapable of being realized, if imperfectly, in the other forms. Indeed, Hegel discusses at length not only classical sculpture but also symbolic and romantic sculpture. As with all symbolic art, sculpture at the symbolic stage falls short of the unity distinctive of the classical. The spiritual content and the sensible form remain mutually exclusive, not assimilated to each other, and the content remains to that extent indeterminate. Hegel identifies ancient Egyptian sculpture as symbolic and explains that it “has not yet overcome the breach between meaning and shape [*Bedeutung und Gestalt*]” (*Ak* 2:161/*A* 2:783).¹² In Egyptian sculpture there is a “lack of inner, creative freedom” and of “the grace and vivacity that result from the properly organic sweep of the lines” (*Ak* 2:159–60/*A* 2:781–82). Such sculpture falls short of precisely that which sculpture is most properly suited to realize and in its classical form does indeed realize. But then when, as Christian sculpture, it assumes the romantic form, spiritual content and sensible presentation are again sundered, now for the sake of the inwardness withdrawn from external things. Such sculpture has a mode of presentation “that does not so immediately cohere with the material and forms of sculpture” (*Ak* 2:166/*A* 2:788). The unity of spirit and sense at which sculpture by its very nature aims is alien to the romantic form of art.

Yet what about the romantic form of art? How is it that, on the one hand, it can sunder the very unity that classical sculpture achieves and that represents the very pinnacle of what art as such, centered in classical sculpture, can achieve; and yet, on the other hand, it can represent a certain advance beyond the classical form of art? How can a break with the classical form produce anything other than a regression to the imperfection of symbolic art? What artistic advance can there be beyond the consummation of beauty?

Hegel explains how it is that an advance beyond classical perfection is possible: it is because “there is something higher than the beautiful ap-

pearance of spirit in its immediate sensible form" (*Ak* 1:499/*A* 1:517). And in turn, there is something higher because the unity of spirit and sense, which constitutes the beautiful appearance of spirit, is opposed to the true concept of spirit, specifically to the inwardness that belongs to spirit, the inwardness that emerges in the post-Greek, Christian era. The advance of spirit is thus a return to itself from out of external appearance; from being reconciled with external appearance in the classical work of art, spirit comes to be reconciled with itself, with its inwardness, by sundering the classical unity into spirit withdrawn into itself, on the one side, and the external, sensible appearance on the other side. Yet how is it that this advance of spirit, its withdrawal into the inwardness of subjectivity, still allows the possibility of art and does not instead simply signal the limit and the end of art? How can there be romantic art? This form is possible only because spirit, whatever its inwardness, indeed in its very inwardness, advances into the external and sensible and withdraws from this element back into itself. This advance and withdrawal leave their trace in the sensible, and it is in the presentation of this sensible trace that art finds a way of presenting spirit even in its inwardness, even if without any possibility of being adequate to that inwardness. This way of presentation is what defines the romantic form of art.

What romantic art lacks in adequacy it gains in spiritual content. Hegel marks this gain by citing a paradigmatic example, by observing what it is that sculpture lacks and that romantic art gains: sculpture's failure to present subjectivity "is shown externally in the fact that the expression of the soul in its simplicity, namely, the light of the eye, is absent from the sculptures. The supreme works of beautiful sculpture are sightless, and their inwardness does not look out of them as self-knowing interiority in this spiritual concentration that the eye expresses" (*Ak* 1:501/*A* 1:521–22). Hegel also marks another difference: unlike classical sculpture, romantic art does not idealize the external objects that it represents; it does not eliminate what is merely natural and accidental in those objects. Since romantic art no longer takes the sensible object as the embodiment of spirit, it is not adverse to keeping the finite, natural deficiencies and even to letting these serve as traces marking the need and the way for the turn inward. Hegel says:

Romantic art no longer aims at the free vitality of existence with its infinite tranquility and the immersion of the soul in the corporeal, this *life* as such in its most proper concept; rather it turns its back on this pinnacle of beauty, interweaves its inwardness with the contingency of external forms, and gives unfettered play to the bold lines of what is not beautiful [*des Unschönen*]. (*Ak* 1:507/*A* 1:526–27)

Painting is a romantic art. More precisely, painting is centered in romantic art. Hegel says that he has “placed the center [*Mittelpunkt*] of painting in romantic, Christian art” (*Ak* 2:176/*A* 2:799). This is, he says, “its proper center [*ihr eigentlicher Mittelpunkt*]” (*Ak* 2:179/*A* 2:802). Yet this is to say that with respect to the classical center, with respect to the center of art as such and as a whole, painting is off-center, is eccentric. And yet, its eccentricity as a romantic art is both its defect and its gain, both its limit and, in another regard, its advance beyond the limit. In this respect, the situation is much the same as with the eccentricity that belongs to painting by virtue of its radical orientation to color: this latter eccentricity is such as to immerse painting in the most sensible of the sensible, while precisely thereby giving it the capacity to let emerge purely from color the entire expanse all the way up to the most intelligible of the intelligible.

In the shining of color that it instigates painting cannot, to be sure, enclose spirit in its outlines, as can sculpture. But what it can do with its coloring is display the traces of spirit turned inward; that is, it can let the inwardness of spirit be expressed, as Hegel says, “in the mirror [*Widerschein*] of externality” (*Ak* 2:179/*A* 2:801–2) and in this manner be presented to itself in its inwardness—indeed despite its inwardness, which to classical art remains inaccessible, which classical sculpture cannot by its very nature express.

That painting is centered in romantic art and attains as romantic painting its proper perfection does not mean that painting is incapable of a certain realization in classical form. Hegel grants that painting flourished in classical antiquity, and yet he insists that the Greeks and Romans were not able to bring painting to the supreme level to which it was elevated in the Christian Middle Ages and especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hegel stresses the contrast between the “unsurpassable beauty” of ancient sculpture and the relative “backwardness” of ancient painting: “This backwardness of painting in comparison with sculpture in antiquity is actually to be expected, because the ownmost heart of the Greek outlook [*der eigentlichste Kern der griechischen Anschauung*] corresponds, more than is the case with any other art, precisely with the principle of that which sculpture can somehow achieve” (*Ak* 2:177/*A* 2:800). As an essentially romantic art, painting could not reach perfection in the classical setting of antiquity. Its time had not yet come.

What Hegel says of painting is not independent of what he saw, of what he had seen, most notably in Heidelberg, in Munich, and in Dresden, prior to the first cycle of Berlin lectures on aesthetics and of what he saw on the voyages undertaken during the Berlin period. These voyages were spaced in the intervals between the four lecture cycles on aesthetics. In 1822 he

traveled to the Rhineland, visiting Cologne and Aachen, and then on to Flanders and Holland. In 1824 he returned to Dresden and then traveled on to Prague and Vienna. Finally, in 1827, he traveled to Paris, “this capital of the civilized world.”¹³ The letters written during these travels—mostly to his wife—attest that he saw nearly all the important paintings that were to be seen in the cities he visited.¹⁴ What he said about painting in the successive cycles of lectures on aesthetics did not go unaffected by what he had seen.

This is not to deny that there are rigorous systematic constraints in the *Aesthetics*. Much of the structure and dynamics of this work is determined by the double division of art as such and as a whole, its division into forms of art and into individual arts. At a certain level of generality, these systematic divisions and the configuration of centerings between the two series control much of the movement of the *Aesthetics*. A telling indication of this systematic control is provided by an alteration (indirectly related to these divisions) that occurred in the final cycle of lectures. It has been shown that Hegel’s concept of the pastness of art (*Vergangenheitscharakter der Kunst*) was considerably sharpened in the 1828–29 lectures (as testified by the three remaining sets of student notes for this cycle) and that this change corresponds to systematic changes that Hegel made in the relevant sections of the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia* (1827).¹⁵

Critical questions could no doubt be effectively addressed to the systematically controlling divisions of art. Does it suffice to divide art as such into the three forms, symbolic, classical, and romantic? Even if this division does arise as directly as Hegel supposes from the basic determination of art, even if the relations between spiritual content and sensible form that define the three forms of art do “proceed from the idea itself” (*Ak* 1:82/*A* 1:75), must one not ask nonetheless whether these forms can suffice otherwise than by enforcing reductionism?¹⁶ Can these forms accommodate an art that, as is perhaps necessary today, is decisively post-Christian, hence postromantic, and not merely the indefinite protraction of the past form such as Hegel seems to allude to when he says: “One can well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but . . .” (*Ak* 1:110/*A* 1:103)? Furthermore, can, for instance, Japanese art—say, of the seventeenth century—be understood as anything other than an art stalled at the symbolic stage, a judgment that is unlikely to be found satisfactory?

There are questions no less pressing with regard to Hegel’s division of art as a whole, indeed first of all the question whether art is a whole with parts consisting of individual arts. Does the logic of whole and parts or of universal and individual suffice for thinking that strange plurality of arts that Jean-Luc Nancy has called the “singular plural of art”?¹⁷ To say noth-

ing of what is omitted from the series of five arts, dance, for instance; or of the differentiation in terms of single, simple arts in relation to which others such as opera could be thought of only as mixtures or hybrids. One knows from the example of Wagner that the opposite is not inconceivable; that is, to regard opera as the total artwork from which other so-called individual arts are separated out.

And what about the way in which Hegel links the two divisions, even prior to the mutual centerings? Does the differentiation of the forms of art also provide, as Hegel insists, "the fundamental principle for the articulation and determination of the individual arts"? Are the individual arts "merely the realization" of the general forms of art "in a definite external material" (*Ak* 1:88/*A* 1:82)?

To the extent that the systematic double division of art controls the structure and dynamics of the *Aesthetics*, these questions are especially pertinent. And yet the division is controlling only at a certain level of generality, and even at this level there are perhaps significant gaps. Especially in the case of painting, Hegel is careful to indicate that the limits within which such generalities can legitimately operate are quite narrow. He says: "Because painting has the determination of engaging so unrestrictedly in the sphere of the inward and the particular, there are, to be sure, few generalities that can be said precisely of it, just as there are few definite things that can in general be offered regarding it" (*Ak* 2:190/*A* 2:813). One would suppose that it is precisely at the point where generalities and systematic determinations reach their limit that Hegel's rich firsthand experience of painting begins to become decisive (see *Ak* 2:241/*A* 2:869).

It has been pointed out, for instance, that on the basis of the extensive firsthand knowledge of painting gained through his travels, Hegel came in the final cycle of lectures to recognize a transitional form within painting, which, if not inconsistent with the systematic articulations, could nonetheless hardly have been foreseen on the basis of them. This form, which he found especially in old German pictures, is characterized by a certain sculptural comprehension of figure: "There the picture does not yet have vitality; the rigidity of marble is still in it."¹⁸

But there is another, still more remarkable instance.

It is known that on his travels in the 1820s Hegel saw many of the masterpieces of Italian Renaissance painting (even though he never traveled to Italy). For instance, in Dresden in 1820 he saw Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* as well as several paintings by Correggio. His trip to Paris in 1827 was especially fruitful in this regard. From Paris he wrote to his wife, telling her of the Italian masters whose works he had just seen during two days spent at the Louvre. His excitement is evident: "There is immense wealth, famous items by the noblest masters that one has seen a hundred

times in copper engravings: Raphael, Correggio, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, and so on.”¹⁹

Accordingly, Hegel says in the *Aesthetics*:

What has Raphael or indeed any other of the great Italian masters not made of the Madonna and the Christ-child! What depth of feeling, what spiritual life, what intimacy and abundance, what majesty and gentleness, what a human heart [*Gemüt*], though one wholly penetrated by the divine spirit, speaks to us out of every feature! (*Ak* 2:177–78/*A* 2:800)

Especially in the case of Raphael, Hegel recognizes a certain decidedly classical moment. Along with the artist’s “supreme spiritual feeling for religious subjects” and his “affectionate attention to natural appearances in the whole vitality of their color and form,” there is also displayed in Raphael’s work a “sense for the beauty of antiquity,” a “great admiration for the ideal beauty of the ancients” (*Ak* 2:252/*A* 2:881). Yet this sense and admiration for classical art did not lead Raphael simply to imitate, adopt, or use the forms that had been so perfectly realized in Greek sculpture. Rather, says Hegel, “he took up only in general the principle of their free beauty” and let this classicism penetrate and determine his painting, giving it an “open and serene clarity and thoroughness of presentation” (*Ak* 2:252/*A* 2:881). What Hegel finds, most remarkably, is that Raphael infused into romantic painting a moment of the classical form, that he did so without regressing to the rigidity of the old German painters, without simply mixing classical and romantic. Rather—and this is what is most remarkable—he infused into romantic painting a certain classical style, a certain moment modeled on but detached from the classical form, and precisely thereby he brought romantic painting to, as Hegel says, “the pinnacle of perfection” (*Ak* 2:252–53/*A* 2:881). In the end Raphael’s painting is neither simply romantic nor simply classical nor simply a blending of romantic and classical, but something quite other, a painting that brought the classicism of the ancients back into the very heart of romantic painting in a way that, from systematic considerations, could not have been foreseen.

Painting cannot capture spirit, cannot contain it within the confines of the canvas as sculpture does in a shaped block of marble. Painting does not enclose spirit in a sensible external object in the sense of making the object such that precisely in its sensible presence it presents spirit openly and without reserve. Painting does not present spirit openly and without reserve: whereas what one sees in viewing a work of sculpture is a presentation directly of spirit in its proper bodily form, a painting neither presents spirit directly nor sets before the viewer an image in which spirit

would itself, as such, be presented. Painting does not, then, supply a merely two-dimensional image of what sculpture presents in its full three-dimensional spatiality. Rather, the two arts are more radically heterogeneous: whereas in sculpture spirit is openly and directly presented, made visible in the work of sculpture, what is made visible in painting is only the withdrawal of spirit from the sensible and external, its retreat into itself, its turn into its own inwardness. What painting makes visible is the escape of spirit from visibility, from confinement within the visible.

Even to speak of the content of painting can be misleading inasmuch as the word may suggest a plenitude that has only to be brought into sensible form in order thereby to be directly presented as such. To be sure, Hegel does not therefore abandon the language of content and form, perhaps because it seems essential for retaining the connections with the more general determinations of art; the result is that Hegel's formulations, precisely when they address the heterogeneity of painting, tend to be twisted into a shape in which they say something rather different from what they would say in a classical discourse. Here in still another respect it is a matter of the eccentricity of painting: for painting is set apart from the classical center, from classical sculpture in which art as such is centered, set apart from the center at which art would directly present spirit as such, set at a point where only the escape, the flight of spirit, is to be presented.

Yet despite the torsion to which it exposes his discourse, Hegel continues to speak of the content of painting. This content, he says, is spiritual inwardness (*die geistige Innerlichkeit*). Yet for painting it is not a matter of directly presenting this inwardness as such, of presenting, for instance, an image of it. For it cannot be presented as such; rather, it "can come to appear [*zum Vorschein kommen*] in the external only as retreating out of it into itself" (*Ak 2:182/A 2:805*). Thus, as a romantic and eccentric art, painting can only trace the withdrawal of spirit from the external and sensible, making spirit appear in its very disappearance, making it visible precisely as it escapes visibility. Or rather, more precisely, painting makes visible the traces that spirit leaves in the sensible exterior as it withdraws into its inwardness.

How, then, does painting make these traces visible? How does it make them visible as traces of spirit in its retreat? How does painting present the *traces as traces* and not as a plenitude in which spirit would be enclosed and thus directly offered to vision? Painting can accomplish such a presentation by virtue of a reduction that belongs to its very constitution as painting; not therefore by the painter's painting in a certain way rather than another, but rather in and through the very inception of painting as such. As its very condition, painting enforces a reduction of the real sensible appearance to mere shining. More precisely, by reducing three-

dimensional spatiality to the two dimensions of a surface, painting effects an *Aufhebung* in which the canceling of the real sensible appearance is paired with a transformation of its visibility into pure shining (see *Ak* 2:18/A 2:625–26). Deprived of its status as an existent object, the surface that remains has therefore the character of being only *for spirit*. It is to this extent inwardized (*verinnerlicht*), not in the sense of being totally assimilated to spirit in its inwardness, but in the sense of being made to bear an indelible reference back to spirit. In this way, what comes to appear on the surface as mere shining becomes also a trace pointing back to spirit in its retreat; and, as painted, the trace is presented as a trace. Painting presents spirit not as circumscribed or imaged there on the painted surface, but only by way of the traces that from that surface point back to spirit in its retreat.

By bringing one back to oneself, the painted traces awaken feeling, disclose inward spirit, subjectivity, to itself in the mode of feeling. Short-circuiting this route to self-disclosure, Hegel characterizes painting simply as “the shining forth of the inwardness concentrated in itself [*das Hervorscheinen des in sich konzentrierten Inneren*]” (*Ak* 2:173/A 2:795)—almost as if in a painting one were given a direct vision of one’s own spirit. One suspects that a certain counterthrust by the language of content and form is here in play, as it is unmistakably in another passage in which Hegel says: “Certainly painting brings the inward [*das Innere*] before our intuition in the form of external objectivity, but its proper content, which it expresses, is affective subjectivity” (*Ak* 2:181/A 2:804). Yet what painting sets directly before our vision is not inward spirit or affective subjectivity, but rather only a painted surface with vector traces capable of awakening affection and thus prompting an affective disclosure of the inward spirit to itself. Here one sees how Hegel’s discourse hovers or twists between, on the one side, a language of content with its conception of art as presenting content and, on the other side, a language more in accordance with the heterogeneity, the eccentricity, of painting. Or rather, to be more precise philologically, the discourse of the *Aesthetics* can be said to be spaced between these two alternatives. Whether the alternation is a result of Hotho’s editorial practices, whether, for instance, it was Hotho rather than Hegel himself who introduced the language of content into the text; whether this alternation may be only a result of the various lecture cycles having been conflated and so may mark Hegel’s development of a more radical conception in the later cycles; and finally whether the language of content might have been introduced by others who prepared transcriptions of Hegel’s lectures—probably none of these questions can be answered with complete certainty, considering the way the text was composed and the limited manuscript resources now available for decomposing it.²⁰

The painter paints only traces. And yet what he gains thereby is immeasurable. For there is almost no limit—perhaps no limit at all—to what can serve as a trace of spirit in its retreat. Individual affective subjectivity can enter into relation with the entire range of things, any of which can become traces turning subjectivity affectively into itself. Therefore, says Hegel, “it is possible for the painter to bring within the sphere of his presentations a wealth of objects that remain inaccessible to sculpture” (*Ak* 2:180/*A* 2:803). The contrast is decisive: the only object that, as in classical sculpture, can directly present spirit is the human form, the form of the human body, whereas there is almost no limit—perhaps none at all—to what objects can serve as shining traces of spirit’s retreat. Hegel enumerates, beginning with the whole range of religious topics and continuing with “external nature, everything human down to the most fleeting aspects of situations and characters.” He concludes: “Each and all of these can win a place here,” that is, in painting (*Ak* 2:180/*A* 2:803). Then, as if to underline that a virtually unlimited range is to be accorded to painting, to underline in particular that painting is not limited to elevated, religious matters, he adds: “For there belongs to subjectivity also the particular, the arbitrary, and the accidental in human interests and needs, and these therefore equally press to be taken up [in painting]” (*Ak* 2:180/*A* 2:803).

As indeed they had been in seventeenth-century Dutch painting.

Hegel’s interest in Dutch painting antedates his travels in the 1820s. In Heidelberg he saw the Boisserée collection of works by Dutch painters, and his acquaintance with such painting was broadened by what he was then able to see in Berlin.²¹ Yet what was most significant in this regard was his travel in 1822, which took him to Flanders and the Netherlands: to Antwerp, then on through Dordrecht, Rotterdam, Delft, to The Hague; from there he traveled on through Haarlem to Amsterdam, the “queen of the sea.” These travels allowed Hegel to see works by Wouwerman, van Dyck, Rembrandt, and many others; it is known, for instance, that in Amsterdam he saw Rembrandt’s *Night Watch*.²²

Hegel was struck by the “utterly living absorption in the *worldly* and the everyday” exemplified in Dutch painting (*Ak* 2:255/*A* 2:884). Hegel draws a connection to the movement away from the Catholic Church, as well as to the more general outlook of the Dutch, who, having expelled the Spanish and having reclaimed much of their land from the sea, experienced a “joy and exuberance in their own sense that for all this they have their own activity to thank” (*Ak* 1:170/*A* 1:169). Hegel clearly sensed this outlook in the people and in their painting, that they had moved from the old religious piety “to joy in the worldly as such, in the objects and particular appearances of nature, in domestic life in its respectability, cheerfulness, and quiet seclusion, as well as in national celebrations, fes-

tivals, and processions, country dances, and the enjoyment and exuberances of consecrations" (*Ak* 2:256/*A* 2:885). In the scenes of peasant life that fill so many Dutch canvases, Hegel sees what he calls "the Sunday of life" (*Ak* 2:257/*A* 2:887).

What is perhaps most remarkable and most consequential is the way in which Hegel's recognition and legitimation of Dutch painting had the effect of reinforcing a theoretical tendency already at work in the *Aesthetics*. Specifically, Hegel is led to introduce into painting at large a bifurcation into two extremes. At one extreme, the chief thing is the profundity of the subject matter, the religious and moral seriousness of the presentation. At the other extreme, the subject matter consists of objects that in themselves are insignificant, and what counts is the subjective skill for presenting the particularities of actual things. Suggesting that this division lies in the very concept of painting, Hegel stresses that it is a bifurcation that is not to be brought under a supervenient unity: "One could even say that the two sides are not, in a uniform development, to be unified, but that each must become on its own account [*für sich*] independent" (*Ak* 2:188/*A* 2:811). Hegel links this two-sidedness to the fact that painting has two means of presentation, by way of shape and by way of color; hence, on the one side, in a way that gives primacy to the ideal and the plastic and, on the other side, in a way that favors the immediate particularity of actual things. He concludes that there are correspondingly two kinds of painting: "The one presents the ideal, the essence of which is universality; the other presents the individual in its close particularity" (*Ak* 2:188/*A* 2:811).

In Hegel's account of this bifurcation of painting, that is, of these two quite nonunifiable kinds of painting, it is significant that he relies on a duality in painting's means of presentation and uses this duality as a basis for deriving the two kinds. The duality of means consists of shape ("the forms of spatial delimitation") and color. Whereas shape and form tend toward the ideal and universal, that is, toward the intelligible, color immerses the painter in the very sense of sense. Hence, in the former case, painting presents "the substantial, the objects of religious faith, great historical events, the most preeminent individuals"; in the latter case, "it has to free and to release into independence the particularity that otherwise remains merely incidental, the surroundings, and the background" (*Ak* 2:188–89/*A* 2:812). However, what Hegel does not explicitly mention in this connection is that the two means of presentation neither have the same status nor are entirely independent. Rather, it is by means of *color* that everything is there—including *shape*. This primacy of color entails that even in the kind of painting that is occupied with shape and thus is oriented to the ideal and universal, the painter is nonetheless engaged with color precisely as the means by which shape is made to emerge. In

being occupied with shape, painting would not dispense with its engagement with color but would rather only not be immersed to the same degree in color. The engagement with color is thus what connects the two otherwise nonunifiable kinds of painting, which therefore are differentiated by the extent to which color either is limited by an occupation with shape or is pursued more freely and more for its own sake.

The paradigms of these two kinds of painting are Italian Renaissance painting and seventeenth-century Dutch painting. Broaching the example of Raphael, Hegel refers to the substantial, lofty subject matter for the sake of which “the overwhelming skill in the painter’s art is forced back as something still less essential” (*Ak* 2:188/*A* 2:812)—that is, the painter’s handling of color, his coloring (*Kolorit*), is limited by the aim of presenting a substantial subject matter. Thus, Hegel draws a remarkable comparison between Raphael and the Dutch painters:

So, for example, Raphael’s cartoons are of inestimable value and they display every excellence of conception, although Raphael himself in his completed paintings—whatever mastery he may have achieved in drawing [*Zeichnung*], in the purity of his ideal yet thoroughly living and individual shapes, in composition, and in coloring—is certainly surpassed by the Dutch masters in coloring, in landscapes, etc. (*Ak* 2:188/*A* 2:812)

Also clearly in play here is the difference between content and trace—that is, between a content which, in order to present spirit, must itself be preeminently spiritual, “substantial,” as Hegel calls it, and a trace, which can be made to present spirit in retreat regardless of its content. In a sense, then, the most radical strain in this already fracturing account is that which leads on to a painting in which content ceases to matter at all. Hegel situates this even more extreme painting at what he calls “the extreme of appearance itself as such.” His description of what happens in painting at this point is one of the most remarkable passages in the entire *Aesthetics*, and though Hegel no doubt had Dutch painting primarily in view here, one cannot but marvel at how the description could, almost more appropriately, serve as a description of Impressionist painting. It is the point

where content does not matter [*gleichgültig . . . wird*] and where the chief interest lies in the artistic production of shining [*das künstlerische Scheinennmachen*]. With supreme art we see fixed the most transient shinings of the sky, of the time of day, of the lighting of the forest, the shinings and reflections of clouds, waves, seas, streams, the shimmering and gleaming of wine in a glass, a flash of the eye, a momentary look or smile, etc. (*Ak* 2:189/*A* 2:812)²³

What Hegel came to see, what the Dutch masters brought him to see more clearly, was that painting veers off from the classical center in a direction in which the shining of the sensible becomes ever more its concern, the shining of the sensible in its very sensibleness and not as the direct sensible presentation of spiritual content. To be sure, alongside this most eccentric painting Hegel retains another kind, a kind that, though not without a certain eccentricity, retains a certain orientation to the classical; it is not insignificant in this regard that Hegel takes Raphael to have brought painting—or rather, it seems, this one of two kinds—to its pinnacle by infusing into it a moment, even though a highly original moment, of classical form. It is almost as though the bifurcation of painting fractures it into *one kind* that, for all its originality as a romantic art, remains turned back toward classical form and sculpturelike presentation by way of content, *and another kind* that, indifferent to content, sets its sights on the shining of the sensible in its utmost sensibleness, tracing in the very sense of sense the retreat of spirit.

How, then, does the painter paint the traces of spirit in retreat? How does he let these traces shine forth as sensible traces of the very withdrawal of spirit from the sensible? The painter does so by the same means always used, by spreading color across a surface, by coloring. Here coloring (*Kolorit*) is not a matter of adding color (*Kolorierung*) to a shape already outlined by drawing.²⁴ Rather, it is by means of coloring that everything is there and that, specifically, the traces of spirit are there. Clearly, then, trace is to be understood here neither as line nor as outline nor as a configuration of lines. Traces are not drawn but painted; they are not even primarily the product of a kind of drawing that emerges from color, not linear moments on the colored surface. As such, they are not specifically linear at all, for what they trace is not an outline of spirit but the withdrawal of spirit from every outline within which one would presume directly to present it as such. Like everything else in painting, these traces that are the primary moments of the painter's art are forms of color and interplays of color. These the painter lays out in such a way that they become vectors indicating—though not in the strictest sense presenting—spirit in its escape from artistic presentation. There is of course no saying how the painter finds this way, in any case not by any general rule, but only through imagination and his own individual sense of color.²⁵ It is entirely a matter of coloring.

In this matter of coloring, the Dutch painters excel. Yet alongside them, as also “masters of the tones of color,” Hegel places the Venetians, preeminently Titian.²⁶ In the *Aesthetics*, in the context of his description of how Raphael reached the pinnacle of perfection in painting, Hegel says

that Titian was still greater “in the wealth of natural liveliness, in the illuminating luster, in the warmth and force of the coloring” (*Ak* 2:253/*A* 2:881–82). It is known from the letter cited earlier that Hegel saw some works by Titian when he visited the Louvre in 1827.²⁷ Most likely he had seen other works by Titian much earlier, since the 1820–21 lecture cycle includes a discussion of the Venetian master as a portrait painter who “stresses the features of liveliness to such an extent that the picture seems to move.”²⁸

In the *Aesthetics* the detailed discussion of color comes in a section entitled “More Detailed Determinations of the Sensible Material.” In this section Hegel extends—indeed to the limit—what had been developed in a more general way in the earlier section entitled “The Sensible Material of Painting,” namely and above all, that in painting it is by means of color that everything is there. However, if regarded against the background of the earlier, general account, the more detailed one seems to be organized in an odd way. For rather than addressing straightaway the all-determining role of color in painting, the section is divided into three subsections: the first two subsections are quite brief but then are followed by what seems a disproportionately long subsection on color. The first subsection addresses linear perspective as a means for introducing depth and hence a semblance of three dimensions.²⁹ The second subsection addresses drawing (*Zeichnung*) and declares quite oddly: “It is drawing alone that provides the distance of objects from one another and also their individual shape” (*Ak* 2:212/*A* 2:838). What is perhaps most odd is the conflict between this declaration, by which drawing would be retained as an essential, independent moment in painting alongside coloring, and the assertion which concludes the subsection and brings the entire matter back to the position laid out in the initial discussion of the sensible material of painting. For Hegel concludes the subsection on drawing by depriving it—contrary to what he has just said—of any essential, independent role in painting: painting’s “proper task is coloring [*Färbung*], so that in genuine painting, distance and shape win their proper presentation only through differences of color and emerge [precisely] therein” (*Ak* 2:212–13/*A* 2:838).

Both the sharpness of the conflict and the emphasis that the *Aesthetics* otherwise places on the all-determining role of color strongly suggest that the text here is corrupt; that in editing it Hotho inserted material that runs counter to what Hegel otherwise and repeatedly says. Especially through the work of Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, it has been shown that Hotho’s editorial practice went well beyond merely conflating the various lecture cycles and sources and rounding out the diction to give it the smoothness and elegance of a finished text. It has become clear that

Hotho added considerable material that most likely did not come from any of the sources at his disposal, material that presumably he thought would improve, or at least positively supplement, what Hegel had presented in the lecture cycles. In some cases this material is contrary to anything Hegel could conceivably have intended. For example, according to Gethmann-Siefert: "So in the edition [prepared by Hotho] there is a worked-out theory of natural beauty, whereas in the lectures Hegel always mentions natural beauty only as a negative foil for his own proper intention of putting the beauty of art, thus the beauty 'reborn from spirit,' at the center."³⁰ It turns out that Hotho's additions to Hegel's lectures do, at least in some significant cases, substantially modify what Hegel said; or, as in the present case concerning the sensible material of painting, such additions may set Hegel's text at odds with itself. For the two initial subsections, on linear perspective and drawing, were almost certainly added by Hotho; they do not occur in any of the extant transcriptions of Hegel's lectures. Their addition serves, of course—were it not for that final, conflicting sentence—to obscure the all-decisive role that Hegel gives to color and the correlative devaluing of drawing. By adding the two initial subsections, Hotho, it seems, tried—unsuccessfully—to blend into Hegel's text an alien, classical-academic conception by which the sensible material of painting consists of linear perspective, drawing, and color.³¹

Contrary to this conception, Hegel considers painting entirely a matter of color: it is color, coloring, that makes a painter a painter. It is by way of color that everything in a painting is there: shape, distance, boundaries, contours, that is, all the differentiating spatial relations that emerge on the painted surface. In turn, indeed in the very briefest formula: "it is only by the use of color that painting brings the soulful to its properly living appearance" (*Ak* 2:213/*A* 2:839).

In the section "More Detailed Determinations of the Sensible Material" (specifically in the long third subsection, which properly constitutes the section as a whole), Hegel broaches a series of discussions of ways in which color and coloring function in painting. He details the way in which the coloring of light and dark determines foreground and background, as well as the contours, the proper appearance of shape as sensible shape. He identifies red, blue, and yellow as fundamental colors, each bearing a certain symbolism; and he describes all other colors as shades or shadings (*Schattierung*) of these. He speaks of the completeness with which the colors must appear in painting, declaring that no fundamental color should be missing entirely, that this completeness provides the basis for the harmony of colors in painting. He also explains how atmospheric perspective (*Luftperspektive*) is constituted by the dampening of color tones so that the contrast of light and shadow is sharpest in the foreground, and as objects

recede they become more colorless so that the opposition of light and shadow is also progressively lost.

It is, in a word, incredible what color can achieve in all these and other related respects. And yet there is one achievement that surpasses these and all others and that brings coloring to its highest point, its culmination, its pinnacle. Hegel marks this pinnacle, identifies what it is that painting must paint, what it is that must be made to emerge from coloring, in order to reach this culmination: "The most difficult thing in coloring [*Färbung*], the ideal, as it were, the pinnacle of coloring [*der Gipfel des Kolorits*], is *carnation* [*Inkarnat*], the color tone of human flesh" (*Ak* 2:220/*A* 2:846). Since painting is entirely a matter of color and coloring, Hegel can equally well say that painting reaches its culmination in painting *carnation*. At least for one of the two kinds of painting, *carnation* would constitute the culmination, namely, for the painting that favors the immediate particularity of actual things and that pursues color more freely and more for its own sake. And yet, in discussing *carnation* Hegel does not broach at all the fracturing of painting as such into two kinds, and it seems that he takes *carnation* to constitute the pinnacle of painting as such, even if—as one would presumably have to say—in one kind it is hedged in somewhat by the aim of presenting a substantial subject matter. In this connection it is not insignificant who, in Hegel's view, has brought the painting of human flesh to the very highest point, to the pinnacle of the pinnacle: "The greatest master in this art was Titian."³² Of all the painters whom Hegel mentions, Titian is the one who would seem perhaps least enclosable in merely one of the two kinds of painting, the one who most nearly succeeds in bridging the two nonunifiable extremes. Yet however this may be, there can be no question but that Titian did indeed excel in painting human flesh.

Carnation is what it is most difficult to color, most difficult to paint, for it unites all other colors wonderfully in itself without letting any particular color predominate.³³ Even the youthful and healthy red of the cheeks is no exception: though it is pure carmine (the 1820–21 cycle says "pure red" [*reines Roth*])³⁴ without a stitch of blue, violet, or yellow, this red, says Hegel, "is only a hint, or rather a shimmer, which seems to press outward from within and then shades off unnoticeably into the rest of the flesh color" (*Ak* 2:220/*A* 2:846). In this way and in this sense, even the red of the cheeks is united with the other colors rather than predominating. More typically the union of flesh colors appears thus: "Through the transparent yellow of the skin there shines the red of the arteries and the blue of the veins, and into the light and dark and the other manifold shinings and reflections there come tones as well of gray, brownish, and even greenish" (*Ak* 2:220/*A* 2:846). Hegel observes that this shining together,

this shining into one another (*Ineinander von Scheinen*) is lusterless (*glanzlos*); this means that the luminosity of flesh is not such as would be produced by something else shining upon it, hence giving it luster, but rather is a luminosity animated and ensouled from within. It is this shining through from within that is most difficult to present. Hegel draws a comparison: "One could compare this to a lake in the light of the evening [*im Abendschein*] where one sees both the shapes mirrored in it and at the same time the clear depth and special character of the water" (*Ak* 2:220/*A* 2:846). Hegel also draws a series of contrasts: the luster of metal shines and reflects, precious stones are transparent and flashing, and yet in both cases there is no shining of one color through another as there is in flesh. With the skin of animals (hair, feathers, wool) there is in each part an independent color and so only a variety of colors, not an interpenetration such as occurs with human flesh. Hegel suggests that the color of a bunch of grapes or of a rose comes nearest to the distinctive shining of colors in human flesh, but even these fall short of the shining of inner animation characteristic of the colors of human flesh. Hegel observes that oil painting, with its capacity for layering, has proved most suitable for presenting the lusterless shining of flesh colors through one another.

Suppose that now a broader perspective is taken on carnation as the pinnacle of coloring and hence also of painting (even, it seems, of painting as such). Three points need then to be mentioned. The first pertains to a question regarding the primacy Hegel accords to carnation, a question regarding his taking it precisely as what is most difficult and as what constitutes the pinnacle of painting. The question is: why carnation and not rather the eye? Even aside from the question of technical difficulty, if painting shares the task of all art, that of giving a sensible presentation of spirit, would this task not be still more perfectly achieved in painting the human eye than in painting flesh? Consider what Hegel says of the eye: "But if we ask in which particular organ the whole soul appears as soul, we will at once name the eye; for in the eye the soul is concentrated, and the soul does not merely see through it but is also seen in it" (*Ak* 1:155–56/*A* 1:153). Why, then, is it not in painting the human eye that painting would most perfectly present the soul, the inward spirit? Why would painting not reach its pinnacle in painting the eye? Hegel does not say. But presumably it is because painting is determined by the task of presenting spirit precisely in its retreat from sensible presentation. One might suppose, then, that in the eye the soul shows itself too directly, shows itself more in its entrance into the sensible than in its retreat from sensibleness. In contrast, the peculiar luminosity of flesh, its lusterless shining from within, makes it ideal for presenting in painting the withdrawn human spirit. In human flesh taken up into painting, one sees, not the soul itself as in the seeing eye, but rather a trace of spirit in its retreat.

The second point concerns a peculiar connection or analogy that Hegel draws later in his lectures. In the discussion of music, he speaks of the human voice, says that it is the perfect instrument because it unites the character of wind and string instruments. He continues: "Just as we saw, in the case of the color of the human skin, that, as an ideal unity, it contains the rest of the colors and therefore is the most perfect color, so the human voice contains the ideal totality of sound, which is only spread out among the other instruments in their particular differences. Consequently it is the perfection of sound." And just as, in painting, the human soul sees itself traced in human flesh, so, says Hegel, "in song the soul rings out from its own body" (*Ak* 2:291/*A* 2:922). Such, at least, is the affinity between painting and music.

The third point concerns the connection between carnation and the eccentricity of painting. Already in the radical orientation of painting to color, Hegel broaches its eccentricity. By its engagement in the most sensible of the sensible, painting is enabled eccentrically to present the entire span from the most sensible to the most intelligible. Because it sides so eccentrically with color, painting is also set apart from the classical center of art as such, and, itself retreating from any direct presentation of spirit, it sets its sights instead on the traces of spirit in retreat. In its engagement, then, with carnation, all of painting's eccentricities come into play and indeed reach their culmination. Engaged with the coloring of human flesh, painting intensifies its orientation to sense and, forgoing the dream of presenting spirit directly as such, veers off from the classical center toward the most perfect sensible traces of spirit in retreat, the color of human flesh.

With carnation, painting comes to the limit of what can be achieved by means of color—to the limit, not in the sense of limitation, but rather as the bound where something becomes fully that of which its determination makes it capable, the point (in Hegel's metaphors) that represents its pinnacle of perfection.

And yet, though with carnation painting comes to its limit, there is—oddly enough, eccentrically enough—a beyond of this limit, a painting that goes beyond this limit. This passage beyond the limit is foreshadowed and indeed prepared by Hegel's identification of a kind of painting in which, as with at least some Dutch painting, content no longer matters and the chief interest lies in the artistic production of shining. This is the point where painting becomes more concerned with the shining of the sensible, with, as Hegel calls it, "the play of the shining of colors [*das Spiel des Farbenscheins*]" (*Ak* 2:211/*A* 2:836) than with the presentation of lofty spiritual content. Nonetheless, at the limit, with the painting of carnation, the preoccupation with pure shining comes to serve for tracing the traces by which spirit in its retreat is presented.

But there is a beyond where painting's divergence away from content toward pure shining is renewed in such a way that the very determination of painting, which prescribes the limit, begins to mutate. Hegel's name for this beyond is "the magical effect of coloring" (*Magie in der Wirkung des Kolorits*). Here is how he describes the magic:

In general, it may be said that the magic consists in so handling all the colors that what emerges is an inherently objectless play of shining, which forms the extreme hovering summit of coloring, an interpenetration [*Ineinander*] of colors, a shining of reflections that shine in other shinings and become so fine, so fleeting, so soulful that they begin to pass over into the sphere of music. (*Ak* 2:221/A 2:848)

Here, then, the object disappears from painting, is dissolved into the play of shinings. Here, then, the extreme hovering summit of coloring is reached, even beyond the pinnacle of carnation. The mutation that then comes into play, there beyond the limit of the determination of painting, attests to the profound affinity between painting and music. It attests equally to an openness of Hegel's thought to the future of painting.

Notes

1. "In the various lecture cycles on aesthetics that he presented in Berlin between 1820/21 and 1828/29, Hegel's remarks on coloring remain remarkably constant" (Bernadette Collenberg, "Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits in den Berliner Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst," in *Phänomen Versus System*, ed. Annet-Marie Gethmann-Siefert [Bonn: Bouvier, 1992], 125).

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. Helmut Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 272. (Hereafter cited as *VAB*.)

3. Cited from the transcription by H. G. Hotho of the 1823 lecture series, in Collenberg, "Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits," 121.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Ästhetik*, ed. Friedrich Bassenge, 2 vols. (West Berlin: Verlag das europäische Buch, 1985), 1:213; G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 838. Bassenge's edition is based on H. G. Hotho's second edition, published in 1842 (the first edition appeared in 1835, only four years after Hegel's death). Subsequent references to this German edition will be given by the abbreviation *Ak*, and Knox's English translation will be cited by *A*. In many instances my translations differ significantly from those given by Knox.

5. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1908–13), 5:225–26; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 71–72.

6. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, 224; Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 71.

7. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, 224; Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 71.

8. Although the word *Illusion* is not missing entirely from the vocabulary of Hegel's lecture cycles (see, for example, the first cycle, Hegel, VAB 274), the group of words based on *scheinen* (*Schein*, *erscheinen*, *Erscheinung*) is, to say the least, predominant.

9. "Surface" does not have here the specific sense it has in Hegel's discussion of painting as involving the reduction of three-dimensional space to a surface. Hegel maintains the distinction terminologically by using the word *Fläche* instead of *Oberfläche* in the discussion specifically of painting (see Hegel, Ak 2:181, 183).

10. The decisive role of shining in art is stressed already in the first lecture cycle. Hegel says, for example, that "shining is the most important thing in painting [*die Hauptsache bei der Malerei*]"; and that painting "is directed to shining [*Schein*]" (Hegel, VAB 243–44).

11. I have discussed this critique in detail and in relation to the question of the pastness of art in *Double Truth* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), chapter 10.

12. For his discussion of ancient Egyptian art, Hegel draws on various reports, ranging from passages in Herodotus and in Plato's *Laws* to what he had read in Winckelmann and in Raoul-Rochette's *Cours d'archéologie* and to what he had been shown at first hand by Creuzer. See Hegel, Ak 2:158/A 2:780.

13. G. W. F. Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. J. Hoffmeister, 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1954), 3:183 (no. 559).

14. A brief account of Hegel's travels and of what he mentions having seen in each city visited is given by Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel and the Art of Painting," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. William Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 61–82, especially note 9. For a more extensive account, see Otto Pöggeler, ed., *Hegel in Berlin: Preussische Kulturpolitik und idealistische Ästhetik: Zum 150. Todestag des Philosophen* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1981), 137–70.

15. See Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, "Ästhetik oder Philosophie der Kunst: Die Nachschriften und Zeugnisse zu Hegels Berliner Vorlesungen," *Hegel-Studien* 26 (1991): 92–110.

16. Such a direct connection is already affirmed in the first cycle of lectures (Hegel, VAB 109–10).

17. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Les Muses* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 13.

18. "Ästhetik nach Prof. Hegel im Winter Semester 1828/29," transcription by Libelt, cited in Collenberg, "Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits," 126.

19. Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel*, 3:187 (no. 560).

20. See Gethmann-Siefert, "Ästhetik oder Philosophie der Kunst."

21. Pöggeler, *Hegel in Berlin*, 232.

22. Pöggeler, *Hegel in Berlin*, 148–52. Hegel mentions these three painters by name in the *Aesthetics*, indeed in the context of a discussion of the general Dutch outlook (Hegel, Ak 1:170/A 1:169).

23. A transcription of the 1826 lecture cycle contains a passage that explicitly connects, on the one hand, the indifference of content and a predominant interest in shining with, on the other hand, the inwardness of painting, that is, the inwardness of spirit that is in and as itself unrepresentable but that nonetheless painting is

to present. This interest in shining Hegel calls—presumably because of the indifference to content—an abstract interest. The passage reads: “Because of its inwardness, painting is the art of shining as such; it arouses an interest in this shining, an abstract interest, which asserts itself still more. The content becomes more or less indifferent, since it is something particular, and the shining gains predominance” (“*Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik: Nach Hegel im Sommer 1826*,” transcription by Kehler, cited in Collenberg, “Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits,” 154).

24. See Collenberg, “Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits,” 127.

25. According to a transcription of the 1823 lecture cycle, Hegel says: “Coloring is the peculiar characteristic [*das Eigentümliche*] of every master; a moment of the productive imagination of the artist” (“*Die Philosophie der Kunst: Nach dem Vortrage des H. Prof. Hegel: Im Sommer 1823*,” ed. H. G. Hotho, cited in Collenberg, “Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits,” 128). The formulation is expanded but also modified somewhat in the published text of the *Aesthetics*: “The sense of color must be a characteristic of the artist, a peculiar way of looking at and conceiving the tones of color that exist, as well as an essential side of the reproductive imagination and invention” (Hegel, *Ak* 2:222/A 2:849).

26. Hegel, *VAB* 272; see also “*Philosophie der Kunst: 1823*,” ed. Hotho, cited in Collenberg, “Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits,” 125.

27. See note 19.

28. Hegel, *VAB* 265.

29. In the 1820–21 cycle Hegel says: “Mere geometrical perspective is quite mechanical and not difficult.” He then goes on to discuss atmospheric perspective (*Luftperspektive*) and to describe how this is produced by the handling of colors (Hegel, *VAB* 274).

30. Pöggeler, *Hegel in Berlin*, 183.

31. See Collenberg, “Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits,” 138–40.

32. “*Philosophie der Kunst: 1826*,” transcription by Griesheim, cited in Collenberg, “Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits,” 159.

33. Collenberg has traced the background of this view of carnation in Diderot’s *Essay on Painting*, which was translated by Goethe and was well known to both Schelling and Hegel. The *Essay* is cited by Hegel: “Whoever has attained the feel of flesh has already gone far” (Hegel, *Ak* 2:220/A 2:847). Already in Schelling’s *Philosophie der Kunst* carnation is identified as “the highest task of coloring,” and flesh is described as “the true chaos of all colors and thus as similar to none in particular, but rather as the most indissoluble and most beautiful mixture of all.” On the other hand, Schelling is prevented from reaching the radical consequences to which Hegel is led, because he fails to accord color the all-determining role given it by Hegel. Pairing color with the senses and drawing with the understanding, Schelling takes drawing as that by which painting has the status of art. For Schelling, what is decisive is the orientation of painting not to the sensible but rather to “a sublime beauty beyond all sensibleness.” See Collenberg, “Hegels Konzeption des Kolorits,” 107–9.

34. Hegel, *VAB* 275.

Hegel on Music

Richard Eldridge

1

At first glance, Hegel says some striking but apparently inconsistent things about music. He appears, first, to defend musical formalism: the view, urged by theorists from Eduard Hanslick to Peter Kivy, that pure instrumental music is an acoustic arrangement that signifies nothing. In music as an art, Hegel notes, “sound, just as sound, is treated as an end in itself; . . . its own form, artistic note-formation, can become its essential end” (A 2:899).¹ He goes on to indicate in particular that successful art music need not be based on any verbal text.

Music has the maximum possibility of freeing itself from any actual text as well as from the expression of any specific subject-matter, with a view to finding satisfaction solely in a self-enclosed series of the conjunctions, changes, oppositions, and modulations falling within the purely musical sphere of sounds. (A 2:901–2)

Yet, second, Hegel also remarks that music that is simply self-enclosed development “remains empty and meaningless” (A 2:902). In order to defeat this threat of meaninglessness, music must acquire “spiritual content and expression” (A 2:902). If it fails to acquire this content, then it fails to be “a genuine art” (A 2:902). These remarks suggest that Hegel is committed to the view that successful art music must somehow be about something—a position held by Aristotle and defended in contemporary music theory by Kendall Walton, Jerrold Levinson, Edward T. Cone, and Fred Everett Maus.

About the now so-called Classical Style music of his own time, Hegel remarks first that by retreating from definite content it has “lost its power over the whole inner life” and become something “for connoisseurs only” (A 2:899). Yet he also notes that “nowadays . . . miracles [in conception and in virtuosity] have occurred in music” (A 2:936), and he claims that

“music carries [the] liberation [of the soul] to the most extreme heights” (A 2:896).

These *prima facie* contradictions (formalism vs. antiformalism; contemporary music as decadently empty vs. contemporary music as miraculously ensouled) are further set by Hegel within a historical framework that present-day thought about the arts finds peculiar and opaque. Music, according to Hegel, is “the second romantic art” (A 2:889) between painting and poetry, where historical epochs are distinguished from one another by the significative salience of a particular medium of art: architecture for the symbolic phase of art; sculpture for the classical phase of art; and successively painting, music, and poetry for art’s romantic—that is, modern or post-Roman—phase. What sense can we make of this? Surely works in various media existed at many historical times. The Greeks, Romans, and medieval Europeans all had music, as did other civilizations. And why should poetry be thought to be more significant than music now?

In fact, however, Hegel’s views about music are neither contradictory nor historically foolish. Instead his remarks on music provide a way to embrace the genuine insights present in the opposed camps (formalism vs. antiformalism; Classical Style as a matter of empty connoisseurship vs. Classical Style as normatively authoritative) without the exaggerations and confusions that often accompany the simple taking of sides in these debates. The key to seeing how his remarks afford balanced insights lies in unpacking his thought that a successful composer of art music must give attention to both structure and “content (true a rather vague one)” (A 2:954). The essentially vague content in question turns out to involve standing, felt aspirations for a meaningful, unified life plus a sense of present circumstances as simultaneously inhibiting those aspirations. This content of felt aspirations and a complex sense of circumstances can inherently be embodied, according to Hegel, in certain kinds of structures of developing sound, with certain open-ended degrees of latitude. In order, however, to make clear both the nature of the human content of music and how that content inherently permits embodiment in purely musical structures, it will be helpful first to survey briefly more standard, more scrutable, and yet ultimately one-sided philosophical views about music and meaning.

2

In his *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854), the Czech music critic Eduard Hanslick distinguishes sharply between purely musical ideas and their

development in musical form, on the one hand, and conceptions that are expressible in language, on the other.

A musical idea brought into complete manifestation in appearance is already a self-subsistent beauty; it is an end in itself, and it is in no way primarily a medium for the representation of feelings or conceptions. The content of music is tonally moving forms.²

Hanslick goes on to compare the self-contained, nonrepresentational character of beautiful forms with visual arabesques that please the eye but represent nothing, adding that musical arabesques, since they develop temporally, are living rather than “dead and static.”³ We may use what Hanslick calls “epithets” to describe music and so characterize musical motives as “arrogant, peevish, tender, spirited, yearning.”⁴ But we must “never lose sight of the fact that we are using [these terms] only figuratively and take care *not* to say such things as ‘This music *portrays* arrogance.’”⁵ Music—at least beautiful art music—has nothing to do with any content that is either borrowed from the rest of life or capable of embodiment in other media.

The beauty of a musical composition . . . is a specifically musical kind of beauty. By this we understand a beauty that is self-contained and in no need of content from outside itself, that consists simply and solely of tones and their artistic combination. Relationships, fraught with significance, of sounds which are in themselves charming—their congruity and opposition, their separating and combining, their soaring and subsiding—this is what comes in spontaneous forms before our inner contemplation and pleases us as beautiful.⁶

Hanslick’s formalism has been widely embraced in modernity, where there has been special importance placed on distinguishing different spheres of experience from one another. It seems important to many, at least when musical works are strikingly successful, not to confuse what seems to be distinctly musical experience with, say, sculptural experience or political experience or religious experience. In *The Power of Sound* (1880) Edmund Gurney writes that “the explanation of the essential effect” of musical art “must be sought . . . in the independently impressive aspect of Music.”⁷ “The ground for the essential effects of the [musical] art must be sought . . . in the facts of mere note-after-note melodic motion.”⁸ Though music is sometimes emotionally expressive and sometimes calls up scenes by association, these things are not what is important about it as an independent form of art; rather, its impressiveness is. When we

look for expressiveness and representation, we frequently find nothing, and we invariably miss what is of central and distinctive value: note-after-note melodic (and harmonic and rhythmic) motion.

Given the putative distinctiveness of musical experience, it would then be a category mistake to attempt to “read in” to that experience meanings and values that are properly realized in other domains. Such readings-in would bespeak ignorance of musical experience rather than insight into it. Following Hanslick and Gurney, Peter Kivy argues that though it is possible “to make a claim about what some piece of absolute music is ‘saying’ . . . making [that claim] good” is impossible.⁹ We should, Kivy urges, accept the thought that “the blessing of absolute music [is] that it frees our thought to wander in worlds that are completely self-sufficient,” where we are concerned only with musical processes and structures, and with musical tensions and resolutions, altogether liberated from any thought about life otherwise.¹⁰ “The genius of absolute music is to make you think of aught but itself and, in so doing, of its (and your) liberation from the world.”¹¹ Stephen Davies defends a similar view, with perhaps less metaphysical pathos, as he remarks that we are often just “curious” about things and “capable of finding enjoyment in attempting to comprehend . . . works in their particularity.”¹² Our involvement with music, Davies urges, arises out of nothing other than “love of the activity” that is engaged in “for fun.”¹³

Such formalist views have considerable plausibility. Attempts to find plots or messages in works of pure instrumental music are often contrived. Musical structures and processes of development are frequently foci of attention apparently “for their own sake.” Absorption in such structures and processes can indeed be “transcendently” self-sustaining.

At the same time, however, it can seem dismissive of the significance of pure instrumental music to regard it only as a pure acoustic structure for formal attention. Does music not in fact both arise from and contribute to human life more generally? It seems natural to regard composers as undertaking to “say” something about human life, albeit abstractly and symbolically. Purely musical processes seem to many listeners to echo and allude to processes of action. As Paul Shorey remarks, Plato and Aristotle regarded “music [as] the most imitative of the arts” in virtue of its “communication of a mood or feeling” whose pattern it shares.¹⁴ Even Gurney, who locates the essential power of music in melody alone, concedes that “the *general* bearing of speech on melody” is responsible for “the vivid effect, which a fine melody produces, of being *something said*—a real *utterance* of transcendent significance.”¹⁵

The music theorist Edward T. Cone suggests that the performance of music involves taking up a role or persona that functions as a source of

utterance. Performers of musical works, that is, do something that is like acting from a verbal script; they play a role. "All music, like all literature, is dramatic; . . . every composition is an utterance depending on an act of impersonation which it is the duty of the performer or performers to make clear."¹⁶ Even in text-based music, Cone argues, musical personae "express themselves at least as much by melody as by speech, and as much by tone-color as by phonetic sound": the music itself, that is to say, speaks.¹⁷ True, purely instrumental music "has no content that can be paraphrased in other music, or in words, or in any other medium; and its elements—notes, chords, motifs—normally have no referents";¹⁸ but verbal language too "has a gestural as well as a strictly semantic aspect," and "especially in dramatic poetry . . . words . . . can be used to produce almost purely gestural effects that depend less on the specific meanings of the words than on the mode of performance . . . they imply."¹⁹ The meaning of music is bound up with this gestural dimension of communicative utterance.

Kendall Walton similarly suggests that musical expressiveness can be regarded as a species of representation. "To be expressive is to bear a significant relation to human emotions or feelings or whatever it is that is expressed. Why doesn't this itself amount to possessing extra-musical 'meanings,' and why shouldn't expressiveness count as a species of representation?"²⁰ According to Walton, purely instrumental music prescribes imaginings: we *are to* hear in it imaginatively certain courses of emotional development, in something like the way in which even abstract paintings frequently prescribe that we see one figure behind another.²¹ Like Cone, Walton suggests that these courses of development are frequently to be ascribed to an implied persona set up by the compositional action of the actual composer, just as a lyric poet sets up an implied speaker functioning as a locus of certain thoughts and feelings, as itself a role into which its readers are to enter.

Peter Kivy objects against this suggestion that Walton has conflated two quite distinct concepts of imagining: Kantian productive or constructive imagination, through which we come to notice anything at all; and fictional imagination, in which we take ourselves to follow a story about nonexistent characters.²² While it is true, Kivy concedes, that we must imaginatively attend to the piece of music before us, it by no means follows that in doing so we are taking the music to be *about* any characters or actions. While this seems clearly right, Walton, too, notes that works of music do *not* present us with (images of or claims about) definite objects, persons, or actions that we can identify elsewhere, apart from the music. In this sense, there is, in Walton's terminology, no "work world" presented by a piece of purely instrumental music.²³ But this fact does not stop the musical work from offering us auditory experiences that we "use . . . as

props" for imagining courses of emotional life, and when we thus imaginatively use props—as the work prescribes—then the work is functioning communicatively: it "says" something to us or "represents" to us what certain courses of emotional development are like by inducing us imaginatively to undergo them.²⁴

Jerrold Levinson defends a similar view, and he adds an account of *why* we play such games of dramatic musical imagination. Musical structure alone can be worth our attention as an object of pure enjoyment, just as Davies argues.²⁵ That is one of its benefits. But musical structure as a prop for imagining also offers the further rewards of participating in emotional resolution (feeling emotions to have courses of temporal development, like the development of plot in Aristotelian terms from beginning to middle to end), of cultivating expressive potency, and of communing emotionally with another mind.²⁶ Quite other than mere escape from the world, experiencing music imaginatively functions as the catharsis—the clarification and the cleansing—of the emotional lives we may share with other human beings.

Taking the opening of Beethoven's String Quartet op. 95 as his example, Fred Everett Maus argues not only that it is natural to hear in it "a succession of dramatic actions," but further that we cannot even develop and apply the technical terminology of formal musical analysis (cadences, suspensions, dissonance, resolution, and so on, as manifested in certain harmonic relations and successions) without relying on hearing the drama in the music.²⁷ Structural description presupposes dramatic description in order to identify the lexical units of formal analysis and the relations of sequiturity among them within a work. "A satisfactory account of structure must already be an aesthetically oriented narrative of dramatic action."²⁸ We hear the musical drama before we attend to the formal structure in itself.

A second strategy for characterizing the content of purely instrumental music focuses less immediately on the workings of the imagination of the individual auditor and more on the social uses of works of music. Broadly speaking, those who have developed this strategy are all interested in works of music as instruments of signification. Here the choice of the term "signification" is deliberate. Rather than specifying a definite, paraphrasable, single thought that a musical work encodes, these theorists instead look at how the production of certain kinds of musical works both proceeds from and refigures norms for the development of subjectivity that are already in circulation in their cultures. In thus turning their attention on the social uses of music in encouraging and inhibiting certain courses of identity development within the framework of the reproduction of social life, these theorists are turning the techniques of ethno-

musicology, originally developed to study music in non-Western cultures, on Western art music.

Rose Rosengard Subotnik has contributed to this line of thinking by developing a distinction between structural (formal) listening and style (sound-surface) listening.²⁹ Structural listening, she argues, is foreign to most music in most cultural settings.³⁰ “Only some music strives for autonomy. All music has sound and a style. Only some people listen structurally. Everyone has cultural and emotional responses to music.”³¹ Like Maus, Subotnik argues that formal analysis presupposes stylistic listening. “Style is not extrinsic to structure but rather defines the conditions for actual structural possibilities; . . . structure is perceived as a function of style more than as its foundation.”³² Building on work by Leonard Meyer,³³ Subotnik argues that when people *do* learn to listen structurally to absolute music, they are entering into a course of development aimed at the cultivation of self-conscious, distinctive, putatively autonomous individuality—the kind of being-in-the-world that has been cultivated in the West, but not so clearly elsewhere, since the Renaissance.³⁴ Structural listening requires “in its pure state . . . the renunciation of premises, organizational principles, purposes, meanings, values, and meanings derived from outside of a musical structure” for the sake of focusing instead on structure alone as an object of purely contemplative attention.³⁵ This requirement is part of post-Renaissance Western art music’s social meaning, a social meaning that is bound up with the project of Western individualism.

Susan McClary develops a similar reading of the social functions of post-Renaissance Western art music, focusing specifically, however, on its roles in furthering certain conceptions of gendered identity.³⁶ For example, Monteverdi’s invention of the *stile rappresentativo* in inaugurating modern dramatic opera in the seventeenth century rested on his development of distinct styles of musical expression for female and male characters. The dramatic action of an opera requires women and men doing things. The musical task of the composer in setting the action requires writing music that comments on and deepens the characterological representation of the women and men presented. So what did Monteverdi do? He wrote music for men that is lyrical, transcendent, dominated by well-organized stepwise melodic motion and clear I-V-I harmonic development with strong final cadences. He wrote music for women that is much more chromatic: there are more passing tones, more suspensions, less sense of a governing key center, and weaker cadences, so that the music is almost antiteleological. Why did Monteverdi do this? Because he was both drawing on and reinforcing a sense already circulating in his culture of how men and women respectively mostly do and mostly should think and feel and act. Men control their passions, and they set and achieve goals;

women are emotional, seductive, and unstable.³⁷ McClary also notes and criticizes the standard use in the formal analysis of purely instrumental music of the terminologies of masculine and feminine themes and masculine and feminine cadences. Masculine themes and cadences have a strongly marked direction of motion; feminine themes and cadences in contrast are more wandering. The broad point is clear: the composition, performance, and consumption of so-called absolute music—putatively a set of structures designed for the absorption of any reflective intelligence—are cultural practices bound up with the rest of culture, where rights, powers, and roles of all kinds are constructed and contested. In its cultural settings music does significative work.

Lawrence Kramer has offered what he calls three radical presuppositions for studying music that generalize the strategies of Subotnik and McClary.

1. “Music participates actively in the construction of subjectivity.”³⁸ That is, composing, performing, and listening to music are activities through which specific senses of a self and its interests are developed.

2. “We hear music only as situated subjects and hear *as* music only that acoustic imagery which somehow ‘expresses’ part of our situatedness, our ensemble of ways to be.”³⁹ That is, what makes a piece of music intelligible as music is *not* a function of form alone for all subjects. Instead, different subjects respond to and take an interest in different forms, and which forms they respond to (and which they don’t) is in part a function of what they *in particular* care about and do within specific cultural settings. (Music can also teach us some new things to care about and do.)

3. The processes of subject formation that include processes and practices of music construction and of music performing and listening always further some ideologies and undermine others.⁴⁰ That is, no conception of what it is worthwhile for subjects to do and to care about effectively articulates everyone’s interest. All conceptions of interest are contested, and all are effective for some, but not for others. Specific ways of composing, performing, and listening to music are always caught up in a contestatory play of conflicting interests.

3

What ought we to make of these opposed formalist and antiformalist stances in the philosophy of music? It does seem important to emphasize that we typically listen to music with engaged imaginative attention, not through ambient perception alone, and it seems plausible to suppose that

composing, performing, and listening to music are practices through which subjective identities—certain routes of interest and feeling—are developed, always within a particular culture as an ensemble of practices. The interest of works of purely instrumental music as objects of imaginative attention and as signifiers within cultural practices seems readily to transcend simple escape, enjoyment, and fun (however much these are present). At the same time, however, “readings” of emotional and depictive plots of works of instrumental music can seem contrived. Are we really prescribed to imagine pink elephants dancing or even to “swell with” the music as our own emotional expression? Why not just listen?

What is in fact needed in order to mediate the formalist and anti-formalist stances is a deeper and more complete theory of subjectivity, its cultural situation, and its prospects. Such a deeper and more complete theory must focus in detail on how purely musical content (tonally moving forms) *can* be used to articulate and address subjectivity’s situation and interests, and do so in ways that are both parallel to and yet specifically different from other forms of articulation and address. This deeper and more complete theory of subjectivity in relation to music is exactly what Hegel provides in the section on music in his *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. In order, however, to see exactly how the *Aesthetics* in general and the section on music in particular develop Hegel’s theory of subjectivity in relation to musical practice, it will be helpful first to rehearse briefly the main lines of Hegel’s theory of subjectivity in his theoretical philosophy.

In an important summary passage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel observes that when we stop thinking about ourselves as essentially bearers of representational awareness but instead also think of ourselves as agents, then we think of ourselves as in a situation in which our “certainty is to itself its own object [*Gegenstand*].”⁴¹ That is to say, as emerging agents coming to take up various practical repertoires afforded within a cultural situation, we have an initial inchoate sense—a subjective certainty—of being this or that: the child of one’s parents, the class clown, the possessor of a musical ear, a middling runner, and so on. This initially diffuse subjective certainty is an object of our awareness. It is something to be tested and worked through, as one develops one’s ear, enters into new ways of being with one’s parents, gives up running, or begins to take schoolwork more seriously. We are capable of reflecting on the different skills and ways of being that we take ourselves to possess. Hence we can say that there is across the different things we do a “unity of self-consciousness with itself.”⁴² Yet this unity is initially only implicit, in the sense that how and why we turn to doing now this and now that remains opaque to us and determined by circumstantial contingencies rather than by reasons. If things go well as we grow up (both individually and historico-culturally),

then “self-consciousness exhibits itself as the movement in which this antithesis [between its turning to now this, now that and its being articulately and rationally self-identical throughout its different activities] is removed, and the identity of itself with itself becomes explicit [*wird*: comes about, becomes, or is made manifest].”⁴³ In Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s useful rephrasing of Hegel’s thought:

All of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* describes man’s effort to reappropriate himself. At every period of history he starts from a subjective certainty, makes his actions conform to the directions of that certainty, and witnesses the surprising consequences of his first intention, discovering its objective truth. He then modifies his project, gets under way once more, again becomes aware of the abstract [i.e., merely conceived; unrealized] qualities of his new project, until subjective certainty finally yields objective truth [i.e., comes to fulfillment] and in the light of consciousness he becomes fully what he already obscurely was.⁴⁴

The ideal but actualizable and even self-actualizing end of this process of growing up, according to Hegel, is free human life, construed as the reasonable expression of both one’s particular talents and one’s shared human, rational-reflective nature, within a cultural setting of mutual recognition and endorsement. We come to both agentive and representational subjecthood from within a specific culturally afforded ensemble of practices. We then develop a point of view both on these practices and on ourselves as capable of this and that in relation to practices. We linger in some practices as we catch on to how things are done and practice *at* them, while we withdraw from other practices in frustration and disappointment. Historically, practices are themselves modified through this play of engagements and withdrawals, until, Hegel argues, a culture of freedom is reached, in which each person can live both freely and reasonably, in ways whose worth is evident to all. In the formulation of the *Philosophy of Right*:

Freedom lies neither in indeterminacy [withdrawal from all repertoires, techniques, and immersions in content] nor in determinacy [simply given contingently, without reflection and reflective endorsement], but is both at once. . . . Freedom is to will something determinate, yet to be with oneself [*bei sich*] in this determinacy and to return once more to the universal.⁴⁵

One might well wonder whether Hegel’s argument for the claim that all possessors of an apperceptively unified, judgmental consciousness

must be committed to pursuing a free life so construed is sound.⁴⁶ One might also wonder whether Hegel's claim that this project can in fact be completed by everyone in and through the formation of a culture of rational freedom that is on the verge of appearance is well founded. "Human beings," as Robert Pippin puts it, "may simply *be* the unhappy consciousness; Hegel may be right about their 'self-diremption' but wrong about its possible resolution."⁴⁷ They may be capable of reflection on their subjective certainties and committed therein to the project of expressive-rational freedom in shared cultural life, but be unable to complete that project.

Yet, astonishingly perhaps, these difficulties (if they are difficulties) in Hegel's systematic theoretical philosophy raise few problems for his philosophy of fine art, especially his philosophy of romantic art. His treatment of music as a central romantic art in particular is faithful to, even emphasizes, the thought that rational-expressive freedom in and through cultural life remains an ideal that is neither empty for us nor yet quite perfectly actualizable, at least insofar as there is compelling art. Musical development, then, *abstractly* models our continuing efforts to achieve expressive-rational freedom and unity with ourselves across our various social roles. That this modeling is abstract, rather than sociohistorically and semantically concrete, indicates that this ideal is not, or not yet, wholly actualized throughout personal and social life. Musical development of a certain kind is an anticipation of freedom, not its concrete sociohistorical achievement. Our participation as auditors in the process of musical development directly indicates our involvement in the actualization of this ideal, insofar as musical hearing requires us to be aware of ourselves as actively listening to sustained musical development over time. In listening to music, we exercise and develop the same power of reflective self-awareness aiming at satisfying closure on which our commitment to expressive-rational freedom depends. In order to see how this happens, we can now take up the details of Hegel's remarks on music.

4

Together with painting and poetry, music is, according to Hegel, one of the romantic arts or "the arts whose mission it is to give shape to the inner side of personal life" (A 2:625). In contrast to the symbolic arts, exemplified by architecture, and the classical arts, exemplified by sculpture, the romantic arts do not undertake centrally to present something external for its own sake as a "free individuality" (A 2:888), but involve instead "spirit's inner self-apprehension and its preoccupation with the sphere of

its own circumstances, aims, and actions" (A 2:889). This turn away from external free individuality is manifested even in depictive painting, for the objects presented in a painting are presented from a point of view and for an actively observing intelligence that must take up a particular point of view, both narrational and perspectival, in order to grasp the painting, unlike a sculpture of a recognizable object that may typically imply no narrative and be seen from many spatial points of view.

Music goes beyond painting, however, in refusing all depiction of definite objects. Unlike painting, which continues to depict (albeit by presenting three dimensions indirectly in two), music "keeps firmly to the inner life without giving it any outward shape or figure" (A 2:795). It is, as formalists urge, in this sense depictively about nothing, nonrepresentational. Yet music's reduction of externality to temporality alone has a significative purpose. Music "takes the subjective as such for both form and content" (A 2:889). It is about what it is like to apprehend and have experiences as a subject in general, with a subject's general reflectiveness and associated aim. It is, as anti-formalists urge, in this sense significative.

Sounds succeeding one another in time are the appropriate medium for inviting reflection on point-of-view-having and aim-pursuing in general. Sounds "cannot . . . portray [objects] as they actually exist" (A 2:891). Thus they are suited to sustain both point-of-view-having in general and reflection on it, without being tied to the presentation of any specific object. Even beyond the abandoning of all spatiality (the abandonment of the painterly surface, beyond painting's own abandonment of three-dimensional form), music further involves a "double negation" (A 2:890) of externality: (1) we listen "to the results of the inner vibration" (A 2:890), focusing our attention on the quality and development of the sound, not on the violin or horn as physical objects; and (2) sound itself either decays once produced or it is sustained only through further effort and up to a limit set by breath or length of bow. (This latter point and how music typically has exploited it explains why we tend to hear exclusively electronically generated music, where these physical limits do not exist, more as soundscape than as genuinely felt melody, even not quite as music at all.) Material media are used in the romantic arts not simply as objects of sensory apprehension, but markedly as vehicles of constructive power of arrangement speaking to constructive power of apprehension. Post-medieval music makes use of equal temperament "nonnatural" tuning, initially developed by Vincenzo Galilei in Florence in the 1580s, precisely in order to extend the possibilities of temporally sustained constructive arrangement, thus breaking from the medieval musical practice of the monodic replication of what had been thought to be the music of the celestial spheres.⁴⁸ In postmedieval music, emphasis on the constructive

power exercised in ordering the material and in hearing its order is carried to its greatest height, as it exploits inherently “ideal” and “vanishing” sonic material in time.

There is, then, in purely instrumental music no depiction of external objects and events.

Music does not possess a natural sphere outside its existing forms, with which it is compelled to comply. The range of its compliance with law and the necessity of its forms fall principally in the sphere of the notes themselves, which do not enter into so close a connection with the specific character of the content placed in them, and in their use mostly leave a wide scope for the subjective freedom of the execution. (A 2:898)

Though there are certain associations that are called up by certain sounds (hunting by horn calls; the pastoral by woodwinds), even these associations are matters of history and convention, and a work of music is successful as art not simply insofar as it evokes such associations, but rather insofar as it achieves—as a result of “the subjective freedom of the execution” (the composer’s constructive power)—“necessity . . . in the sphere of the notes themselves.” In order to succeed distinctively as music, music “must free itself from any given text” (A 2:952). (Aptly, Hegel notes that in opera and song “the text is the servant of the music” [A 2:935] and that great scripted drama and poetry often do not make for great opera and song.) In pursuing musical necessity, “sound, just as sound, is treated as an end in itself,” and “artistic note-formation [is] its essential end” (A 2:899). “The real region [of the musician’s] compositions remains a rather formal inwardness, pure sound; and his immersion in the topic becomes not the formation of something external but rather a retreat into the inner life’s own freedom, a self-enjoyment” (A 2:895).

This retreat into inner freedom and self-enjoyment that purely instrumental music is to accomplish is not, however, for the sake of either pure auditory delectation or immediate sense-based pleasure only. Ideas, particularly the idea of completely accomplished individuality in its achievement of expressive-rational freedom, are to enter into the composition not discursively, but in and through the arrangement of sound alone. “The difficult task assigned in music is to make [the] inwardly veiled life and energy [of the subject] echo on its own account in notes . . . and to immerse ideas into this element of sound, in order to produce them anew for feeling and sympathy” (A 2:902). Arrangements of notes can depart from the effort to embody the inner life of the expressive-rational subject and so become merely decorative (the more ordinary movements of Vivaldi? Pachelbel’s Canon in C?). Music “may easily become something

utterly devoid of thought and feeling" (A 2:954). Freedom from any fixed content—either external or conceptually articulated—"will therefore always more or less carry on into caprice" (A 2:955), at least in comparison with the definiteness of presentation in painting and in most poetry. The composing of purely instrumental music carries with it an inherent risk of collapsing into an activity of thoughtless fancy yielding an arbitrary or merely decorative product. As Carl Dahlhaus notes, "Hegel's philosophy of music is stamped, in every phase of its development, with his apprehension that emancipating music [from text and from representation], and emancipating a soul that returns into itself in 'pure sounding,' will lead off into sterility."⁴⁹ As Dahlhaus further sees, one way, according to Hegel, for music to embody ideas is to make use of a text: dramatic libretto in opera or lyric poetry as a *point de départ* for song. "From the start the libretto gives us distinct ideas and tears our minds away from that more dreamlike element of feeling which is without ideas" (A 2:937), and so helps to overcome a tendency of music toward caprice and mere sonic decoration.

But while the risk of caprice is inherent in composing absolute music, the *outcome* of caprice is not. Absolute music can embody content abstractly, without text, and it must do so if it is to be successful as significant art. Hegel notes that even music as accompaniment

must not sink to such servitude [of the text] that . . . it forgets the free flow of its own movements and thereby, instead of creating a self-complete work of art, produces merely the intellectual trick of using musical means of expression for the truest possible indication of a subject-matter outside them and already cut and dried without them. Every perceptible compulsion, every cramping of free production, breaks up the impression [to be made by music]. (A 2:937)

Instead, the composer can and must produce a strictly musical development, either in setting a text or in producing music alone. Only in this way can ideas—and in particular the idea of being a subject capable of expressive individuality—be immersed in sound for "feeling and sympathy" directed at the developing sound itself.

Music then, according to Hegel, "claims as *its own* the depths of a person's inner life as such" (A 2:891, emphasis added). How does it manage to do this? First, the sounds that compose a musical work exist only as an ideal phenomenon, that is, as something essentially realized in experience. Hegel captures this point by noting, again, that we hear the bounded vibrational results of the use of the violin or horn rather than attending to the violin or horn as physical objects. Second, and more crucially,

music as composed, developing sound exists inherently in recollection, as we follow the succession of the notes and their connection with one another. Roger Scruton makes this point by noting that works of music are tertiary objects, composed not simply of sounds (as either physically measurable pitches or pure momentary qualia) but also of tones, heard as leading to one another. It requires memory and attention to hold developing motives, themes, and harmonic and rhythmic patterns in mind as patterns, not all of whose elements are present at any single moment. The pattern that is the music must be followed from within recollection. As Scruton puts it,

We might say that a work of music is a *tertiary* object, as are the tones that compose it. Only a being with certain intellectual and imaginative capacities can hear music, and these are precisely the capacities required for the perception of tertiary qualities.⁵⁰

Hegel captures this point in his terminology by noting that a work of music “is a communication which . . . is carried by the inner subjective life, and is to exist for that life alone” (A 2:891–92). Only a being capable of recognitive recollection can follow and apprehend the work, which itself exists essentially in being apprehended.

The composer, according to Hegel, produces a temporal arrangement of tones through which marked differences (changes of pitch, of motive, of theme, of harmony, of rhythm) are both encountered and overcome: housed within an overall intelligible, recollectable ensemble or pattern. In this way composers explicitly test and develop their powers to encounter and organize difference, therein establishing that they themselves are coherent subjectivities across time who have survived and flourished through an encounter with difference. In the single most important passage of his remarks on music, Hegel writes:

Recollection [*Erinnerung*] of the theme adopted is at the same time the artist’s inner collection [*Er-innerung*] of *himself*, i.e., an inner conviction that *he* is the artist and can expatiate in the theme at will and move hither and thither in it. (A 2:897)

Through this recollection of a developing pattern, expressive unity of the self with itself is tested and developed—abstractly—across time, in and through the occurrence of different experiences (markedly new pitches, motives, themes, rhythms, harmonies) that are nonetheless experienced as forming a unified whole (established by overall harmonic development and rhythmic and instrumental consistency). The self in general has the

possibility and task of “maintaining itself in its other as the self and only the self as such. The self is in time, and time is the being of the subject himself” (A 2:908). Initially its self-identity is “wholly abstract and empty and it consists in making *itself* its object” (A 2:907), that is, in having an accomplished, difference-embracing unity with itself as its task. An empty succession of unrelated “mere nows” must be organized so that I can recognize my life in relation to my experiences *as mine*. The identity of the self with itself must, in the terminology of the *Phenomenology*, come about or be made explicit. By organizing divergent materials into a unified pattern essentially displayed in a subject’s apprehension, music overcomes the incoherence and fragmentation of the self and achieves—within its sphere of tones—expressive freedom and unity with oneself. It “carries this liberation [from abstract, empty subjectivity and mere unintelligible temporal succession and into the experience of meaningful, differentiated totality and selfhood] to the most extreme heights” (A 2:896).

The self . . . only becomes a self by concentrating its momentary experiences and returning into itself from them. . . . The self is what persists in and by itself, and its self-concentration interrupts the indefinite series of points of time and makes gaps in their abstract continuity; and in its awareness of its discrete experiences, the self recalls itself and finds itself again and thus is freed from mere self-externalization and change. (A 2:914)

This achievement of the self is brought about initially through the composer’s act of construction, but is likewise carried out in and through the listener’s attentive following of the musical development. (Composers are, after all, the first auditors—often in imagination alone—of their own work as they monitor the course of the musical development that they are attempting to achieve, thus checking on “how it is going.”) As Julian Johnson puts Hegel’s point, the self, whether composer or listener, “experiences the temporal progression *as its own*.”⁵¹ In R. K. Elliott’s phrasing, we experience the music from within “as if it were our own expression.”⁵² There is neither definite representation here nor, frequently, is there definite expression of emotion, but there is significance for the subject—the accomplishment and reinforcement of its life as a subject—in this participation. Despite his *prima facie* pure formalism, Gurney captures this point well.

The deep satisfaction felt in winning our way from note to note, or phrase to phrase, continually gives us a sense of inward triumph [even] in music whose general expression, so far as it is describable, would not

be called triumphant. . . . In poor music, note after note and phrase after phrase seem to present themselves trivially and pointlessly; but in music we enjoy, as we progressively grasp the form, the sense of absolute possession, of oneness with it, the cogent and unalterable rightness of every step in our progress, may produce the most vivid impression of triumphal advance.⁵³

As already indicated, the key to the liberative establishment through attentive listening of the unity of the self with itself is musical *development*: the coherent, recollectable integration of various musical elements with one another across time. In describing the achievement of unity of musical pattern across differences, Hegel offers a short account of what A. B. Marx was later to baptize and codify as sonata form.

In a musical composition a topic can be unfolded in its more specific relations, oppositions, conflicts, transitions, complications, and resolutions owing to the way in which a theme is first developed and then another enters [exposition: first theme, second theme], and now both of them in their alternation or their interfusion advance and change [development], one becoming subordinate here and then more prominent again there, now seeming defeated and then entering again victorious. (A 2:897)

Dahlhaus notes that Hegel explicitly condemned Carl Maria von Weber's mosaic technique of presenting persons on stage via unintegrated "characteristic" musical motives, without thematic interweaving and development, as in von Weber's *Der Freischütz*, whose Berlin premier Hegel attended in June 1821.⁵⁴ In his *Freischütz* critique, Hegel shares with Humboldt and Goethe a normative classicism or preference for the integrative formal techniques of the Classical Style.⁵⁵

Thematic contrast and development is, however, not the only device for achieving unity of musical pattern across variation. Hegel's most general term for the overall structure of successful music is "cadenced interjection" (*kadenzierte Interjektion*). "Music is itself art only by being a cadenced interjection" (A 2:903). Here "interjection" implies something between a mere immediate cry and the putting forward of a conceptually formed judgment for contemplation. It is something more formed than "a natural shriek of feeling" and something less formed and more specific to its material medium than a thought that can be assessed as true or false. "Interjection" implies the insertion into a structure of a compositional unit—a new theme or motif (melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic)—as a marked new focus of attention. "Cadenced" then implies that interjections

must lead toward some culmination, toward a resolution of the material that has been interjectively introduced. Closure or consummation, rather than simple cessation, must be achieved.

The unavoidable means, according to Hegel, for establishing musical unity over significant stretches of short-term attention is rhythm. Introduction of a bar or measure functions "to establish a specific temporal unit as the measure and rule for the marked contemplation of the previously undifferentiated temporal succession" (A 2:915). Without bars, that is, musical events cannot be readily marked for hearing by having beginnings and endings come on strong rather than weak beats. One needs a system of regular strong and weak beats in order to achieve this marking of thematic and melodic material for hearing. "Only if the definiteness of the measure conquers and regulates what is arbitrarily unlike [i.e., specifically different pitches and sonorities] is that definiteness proved to be the unity of accidental variety and the rule for it" (A 2:916).

Over significant stretches of short-term musical attention, rhythmic patterning is necessary for musical hearing of what is significant. Over longer stretches of development there must be governing "deeper relations and secrets of harmony which have a necessity of their own" (A 2:932). A successful musical piece must, somehow, move from consonance into dissonance and then into resolution. Successful music

abandons a purely consonant progression, goes on to oppositions, summons all the starkest contradictions and dissonances and gives proof of its own power by stirring up all the powers of harmony; it has the certainty nevertheless of being able to allay the battles of these powers [i.e., to achieve resolution] and thereby to celebrate the satisfying triumph of melodic tranquility [in the coincidence of melodic closure with harmonic closure]. (A 2:932)

In general as the music develops, melody, or what Hegel calls "the poetic element in music, the language of the soul" (A 2:929), "float[s] independently above the bar, rhythm, and harmony" (A 2:930): it has its own contour. "And yet on the other hand it has no means of actualization except the rhythmical measured movement of the notes and their essential and necessary [harmonic] relations" (A 2:930). Rhythm is required to mark significant melodic musical events (beginnings and ends of phrases), and harmony is required in order to lend to the melody a significant place in an overall, longer-term harmonic development, where in the end harmonic closure and melodic closure coincide.

In focusing on the importance of the coincidence of harmonic and melodic closure within a rhythmic structure, Hegel mediates the classic opposition between Rousseau's advocacy of melody as the natural locus of

the life of music and Rameau's emphasis on the necessity of properly developed harmonic development in a successful work. "In [its] close link with harmony the melody does not forgo its freedom at all; it only liberates itself from the subjectivity of arbitrary caprice in fanciful developments and bizarre changes and only acquires its true independence precisely in this way" (A 2:930). The freely achieved substantive and meaningful unity of the melody requires appropriate harmonic cadencing as its closure. Melody, one might say, stands to harmony as *Willkür* (choice or subjective particularity) stands to rational necessity (reasonable rules for self-formation and expression in social life): the former finds its significance in relation to the latter and only therein, and vice versa. "We have a battle between freedom and necessity: a battle between imagination's freedom to give itself up to its soaring [in melody] and the necessity of those harmonic relations which imagination needs for its expression [as opposed to mere unburdening, discharge, or shrieking] and in which its own significance lies" (A 2:932).

5

Hegel's account of music as a fine art applies most obviously to Classical Style music (Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven). In keeping with its norms, Hegel emphasizes the importance of thematic developmental structure (exposition and development), overall harmonic organization, the use of regular rhythms, and the working-through of motivic materials in overall compositional unity.⁵⁶ When appropriate formal structure is achieved, then music is properly freed from dependence on any text, and it displays a value for the life of a subject that is independent of liturgical or other extramusical cultural uses.⁵⁷ Hegel himself remarks that "nowadays . . . two miracles have occurred in music: one in the conception, the other in the genius of virtuosi in the execution. . . . The result is that . . . the notion of what music is and what it can do has been more and more widened" (A 2:936), as though it has just recently been discovered what art music properly can be and is. Hegel even reportedly remarked in dinner table conversation, after having heard the revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* by Mendelssohn in Berlin in March 1829: "That is no proper music; we have really gotten further than that now."⁵⁸ Dahlhaus, who cites this remark, goes on to speculate that Hegel may here have been endorsing E. T. A. Hoffman's thought, in his famous review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in the 1810 *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, that Beethoven's purely instrumental music is itself of direct religious significance, so that we need not revert any longer to textually based Passion music.⁵⁹ Though it is unclear whether he

has Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven explicitly in mind, Hegel does remark that “especially in recent times music has torn itself free from a content already clear on its own account and retreated in this way into its own medium” (A 2:899).

This retreat has its costs, Hegel notes, in that loss of textual content means that purely instrumental music

has lost its power over the whole inner life, all the more so as the pleasure it can give relates to only one side of the art, namely bare interest in the purely musical element in the composition and its skillfulness, a side of music which is for connoisseurs only and scarcely appeals to the general human interest in art. (A 2:899)

As a result of this retreat from textual content, there has arisen in relation to music a division between amateurs and experts: “An essential difference begins to arise between the dilettante and the expert” (A 2:953). Amateurs continue to prefer text-based “music as accompaniment” (A 2:954) and are tempted to try “snatching a meaning” out of what is to them an “apparently insubstantial procession of sounds” (A 2:954). Experts, in contrast, have at “their fingers’ ends the inner musical relations between notes and instruments [and] love instrumental music in its artistic use of harmonies and melodious interactings and changing forms” (A 2:954). They are “entirely satisfied by the music itself” (A 2:954). Yet although Hegel, as Dahlhaus has emphasized,⁶⁰ worries about the inherent risk of musical emptiness and about a tendency of musical development itself to become capricious, there is, for him, no going back to any earlier text- and ritual-based musical culture, and he identifies more with the experts than with amateurs (despite his own confession that he is “little versed in this sphere” [A 2:893]). *Fine art music must develop as music alone.*

In virtue of the most natural and obvious application of Hegel’s views to Classical Style music, one might well wonder whether those views amount *only* to a preference for purely instrumental music in the Classical Style. Is this preference centrally a matter of Hegel’s class identification with educated experts, musical and otherwise? Or can Hegel’s views offer any insights into post-Classical Style musical life? Hegel himself argued that ultimately the threat of empty, formal, and merely decorative virtuosity in both composition and execution could be met not within music alone, but only by poetry. Art, according to Hegel, cannot remain “exclusively [in] the element of the inner life” (A 2:796), as purely instrumental music does, but must go on “to bring to our contemplation not only the inner life but also, and equally, the appearance and actuality of that life in its external reality” (A 2:795). It must show, in particular, how intellectu-

ally formed ideas are lived, how the ideas we have of ourselves do or can give a particular shape to our form of social life. In order to do this, art “must use the sensuous material of its disclosure as simply a means of communication and therefore must degrade it [the sensuous material] to being a [conventionalized] sign which has no significance by and in itself” (A 2:796). That is, poetry, not music (which attends only to the sensuous sound-material in itself and for the sake of the inner life alone), must become the more salient form of art, the form that is more adequate to art’s vocation.

But then what should we say about music after the heyday of the Classical Style? Dahlhaus observes, with great insight, that Hegel’s turn toward poetry and verbal-ideational content, away from music alone, as the most salient form of art in later modernity can be understood as embodying Hegel’s recognition of a genuine problem that Classical Style music and post-Classical Style music face. There is a risk attaching to the emancipation of music from all textual content in order to concentrate on the musical development of instrumental sound alone. This emancipation sets up real possibilities of empty, merely decorative formalism and of a musical art for experts that has lost all contact with vernacular life, in relation to which “merely popular” music remains allied more closely with song, dance, and social use. As Dahlhaus puts it,

The dialectic of emancipation and estrangement, of autonomy and loss of substance—which one could say really became evident in the new music of the twentieth century—is already recognized [by Hegel, in his response to instrumental music, especially to Beethoven] as a central problem.⁶¹

Can these problems of estrangement, loss of textual and social-liturgical substance, and of the fragmenting of musical culture into “high” expert culture and “low” popular art be addressed by music alone, in Hegel’s terms?

In *Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, Leonard Meyer argues that they cannot. We live, Meyer argues, at the end of the Renaissance. Once upon a time, from roughly 1450 in Italy to roughly 1950 in the United States and Western Europe, the cultivation of individuality mattered as a central cultural project. People, or at least some people at the center of culture, thought that it was important to have a free and independent personality and to determine the shape of one’s own life from one’s own resources of personality, rather than passively inheriting one’s life from one’s forebears. They further thought it important that the life thus freely shaped should be rationally intelligible to others, as opposed to living in what Hegel calls a “mush of ‘heart, friendship, and enthusiasm.’”⁶² Instead, subjective par-

ticularity would find objective fulfillment in a shared and self-consciously willed life of social freedom.

But alas, Meyer argues, that Hegelian project is no longer on the books for us. As a result of the modern conditions of industrial work, spectacular commodity production and consumption, and the bureaucratically regulated reproduction of culture, no one has time or interest any longer in such cultivation of self and society toward social freedom and accomplished individuality.

Once upon a time, when that Hegelian project *was* on the books, the most valuable and central form of music was absolute, purely instrumental music that moved from initial statement to complication to some kind of surprising yet necessitated resolution, as itself an abstract parable of the centrally valuable path of development to which subjectivity is or was thought to be open, just as Hegel argues. Meyer defines maturity as “self-imposed tendency inhibition and the willingness to bear uncertainty,” and the music that was most valued from 1450 to 1950 abstractly displayed, according to Meyer, development toward maturity.⁶³ As opposed to a music of less structured sound surfaces, Meyer favors the music of syntactic development. “It is because the evaluation of alternative probabilities and the retrospective understanding of the relationships among musical events as they actually occurred *leads to* self-awareness and individualization that the syntactical response [to music] is more valuable than those responses in which the ego is dissolved.”⁶⁴

But now, Meyer argues, such responses are typically not open to us, for we no longer have the project of individualization available to us. Increasingly, from 1900 to 1975, “the idea that progress is inherent in the processes of history no longer seems credible.”⁶⁵ As a result, in the music world there is now “a coexistence of a number of alternative styles” in “a kind of dynamic steady state.” That is, pluralism reigns; many alternative styles are available. But none of these alternative styles is central for significant music in relation to a significantly shared cultural project, for there is now no significantly shared cultural project. Things happen. People write this and that. But the works that are thus produced are receivable only as bits of formal organization that might be liked or not by different people, as may be, not as abstract patternings of the valuable development of subjectivity as such. A sybaritic presentism-cum-consumerism dominates, just as Hegel feared could happen.⁶⁶

As the major alternative styles that *are* now circulating in culture, Meyer lists the following:

1. Academic serialism in the style of Milton Babbitt—largely an intellectual coterie music, dependent on government and university support for its continuance, and not really finding any audience, because not producing any hearable structures of significance.

2. Primitive or tribal music, i.e., rock, dominated by repetitive rhythms and motifs, by verbal text, and by a simple verse and chorus structure, with no syntactic development comparable to that of Western art music.

3. Ambient music or elevator music, the light music of distraction while we work in our cubicles or dine with our friends.

4. Transcendental particularism and aleatoric music, or music as unstructured sound, in the style of John Cage's definition of music as "sounds heard at a bus stop." Zenlike, Cage urges, we are to open our ears to the being of sound as sound, without worrying much about compositional development.

And that's about it. Various intermediate compromises are possible: for example, the minimalism of Philip Glass and Steve Reich combines bits of the repetitiveness of rock with the sound surfaces of ambient music with aleatorism's rejection of development. But music no longer plays the central cultural role once fulfilled by Western art music. Explicit returns to the structures of Western art music in the style of the new Romanticism of David Diamond or Alan Hovhaness are hearable only as either pastiche or empty melodism.

But is it quite true that these are the only available alternatives? Hegel's account of absolute music as significantly embodying the inner life through *cadenced interjection* in fact usefully suggests further alternatives that have not gone unexploited. Recall that Hegel argues that purely instrumental music must have development; it cannot simply linger in continuous consonance; there must be interjections or marked musical events, further housed within an overall cadential structure. This account suggests a number of techniques of composition that draw on the normative authority of Classical Style music but without simply replicating it. The rate of harmonic development (so-called harmonic rhythm) can be increased; that is, the tonic can be moved away from at a more rapid rate, as in the music of Berlioz, for example. The range of dissonant sonorities that are introduced can be increased, as in Wagner, Mahler, and Debussy, thus making available their introduction within a new work as a marked musical event.⁶⁷ Folk melodic motives (particularly previously unexploited modal motives) can be picked up and subjected to thematic variation, as in Bartok and Stravinsky, or as in Messiaen's use of modal motifs taken from birdcalls. New instruments with new sonorities to be explored can be introduced, as in the exploitation of percussion in twentieth-century works from Bartok and Stravinsky through George Crumb and contemporary investigations of Javanese Gamelan music. Hegel himself notes that "freedom from the pedantry of meter and the barbarism of a uniform rhythm" may help to keep the melody from sounding "humdrum, bare, and lacking in invention" (A 2:918); Bartok, Stravinsky, Copland, and Shostakovich have significantly exploited the possibilities of introducing

accents on offbeats, using more complicated rhythmic figures, and varying the time signature from measure to measure.

To be sure, each of these compositional possibilities carries risks. Increased rate of harmonic development, greater dissonance, borrowed melodic motives, new instrumentation, and rhythmic variation all tend to call attention to the local sound surface and away from an awareness of overall harmonic development. But then, this is just what it means to have a marked musical event: an interjection. Given the compositional achievements of the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries—from Bartok and Kodály to Stravinsky and Copland, Shostakovich, and now to Ned Rorem, William Schumann, and a wealth of younger composers just coming to wider notice—there is no reason to think that it is impossible to house interjections within an overall cadential structure in absorbing ways that continue to engage the inner life of subjectivity. What we hear as musical achievement continues to be describable in the Hegelian terms of cadenced interjection. As Theodor Adorno observes, “Hegel’s thesis that art is consciousness of plight has been confirmed beyond anything he could have envisioned,” and it continues to be confirmed in purely instrumental art music as powerfully as anywhere.⁶⁸

At the conclusion of the Gospel of John, the writer assumes explicitly the role of witness to something sacred that has gone on to play itself out in further events beyond the framework of his narrative. “This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”⁶⁹ Hegel’s own last words about music—perhaps legible as a distant echo of John—are: “These are the most essential things that I have heard and felt in music and the general points which I have abstracted and assembled for consideration of our present subject” (A 2:958). Many more things—words and music—might be and would be written, but it seems apt to regard Hegel’s account of instrumental music as a fine art as itself a form of witness to “the elemental might of music” (A 2:908) that continues to display itself in our own time.

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). All references to this work will be given in the text as A, with volume and by page number.

2. Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 28–29.

3. Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 29.
4. *Ibid.*, 32.
5. *Ibid.* (emphases added).
6. *Ibid.*, 28.
7. Edmund Gurney, *The Power of Sound* (London: Smith, Elder, 1880), 338.
8. Gurney, *Power of Sound*, 315.
9. Peter Kivy, *Philosophies of the Arts: An Essay in Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 155.
10. Kivy, *Philosophies of the Arts*, 209.
11. *Ibid.*, 217.
12. Stephen Davies, "Why Listen to Sad Music If It Makes One Feel Sad?" in *Music and Meaning*, ed. Jenefer Robinson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 242–53, at 250.
13. Davies, "Why Listen to Sad Music?" 252.
14. Paul Shorey, notes to Plato, *Republic I*, trans. Paul Shorey (London: William Heinemann [Loeb Classical Library], 1930), 224 note c.
15. Gurney, *Power of Sound*, 125.
16. Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 5.
17. Cone, *Composer's Voice*, 9.
18. *Ibid.*, 161.
19. *Ibid.*, 163.
20. Kendall Walton, "Listening with Imagination: Is Music Representational?" in *Music and Meaning*, ed. Robinson, 57–82, at 58.
21. Walton, "Listening with Imagination," 61.
22. Kivy, *Philosophies of the Arts*, 47.
23. Walton, "Listening with Imagination," 82.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Jerrold Levinson, "Music and Negative Emotion," in *Music and Meaning*, ed. Robinson, 215–41, at 231.
26. Levinson, "Music and Negative Emotion," 234–36.
27. Fred Everett Maus, "Music as Drama," in *Music and Meaning*, ed. Robinson, 105–30, at 118.
28. Maus, "Music as Drama," 129. Maus qualifies this remark by saying that it is true "for at least some music." I am not sure what music he is thinking of for which it is *not* true: perhaps pure (computer-generated?) soundscape arabesques where we hear only background and no musical drama. Maus's claim does seem to apply to nearly all significant composed instrumental art music.
29. Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 149.
30. Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations*, 158.
31. *Ibid.*, 175.
32. *Ibid.*, 168.
33. See Leonard Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See especially chapter 5, "The End of the Renaissance?" and "Postlude."

34. Subotnik's *Deconstructive Variations* includes a tour-de-force 108-page analysis of Chopin's sixteen-bar A-Major Prelude, arguing that it expresses, ambivalently, *both* a sense of the possible happy completion of the cultivation of individuality within a social setting *and* the irrational violence that this cultivation always entails ("How Could Chopin's A-Major Prelude Be Deconstructed?" 39–147).

35. Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations*, 159.

36. Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). See especially chapter 2, "Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music," 35–52.

37. Here I note that I am actually simplifying and flattening McClary's analysis. She also remarks that the seventeenth century was a time of uncertainty about gender roles and that Monteverdi did write some particularly "feminine" music for men. Yet that music was less popularly successful, she claims, than his more "standard" music, and the central norms of the musical representation of character that Monteverdi laid down persisted at least well into the twentieth century.

38. Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 21.

39. Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, 24.

40. *Ibid.*, 24, final paragraph.

41. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), paragraph 166, p. 104; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952), 133.

42. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 167, p. 105; Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.

43. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 167, p. 105; Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.

44. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 65–66 (my interpolations). See also the discussion of the opening paragraphs of chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology* in R. Eldridge, *Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 27–32.

45. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), addition to section 7, p. 42.

46. For doubts about the soundness of Hegel's arguments for this conclusion in either the *Phenomenology* or the *Science of Logic*, see Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 214–21 on the *Phenomenology*, and 225–57 on equivocations in the opening chapters of the *Logic*.

47. Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 167.

48. On Vincenzo Galilei's development of equal temperament tuning, see Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18–20.

49. Carl Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, trans. William W. Austin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 49.

50. Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 161.

51. Julian Johnson, "Music in Hegel's *Aesthetics*: A Re-Evaluation," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 31, no. 2 (April 1991): 160.

52. R. K. Elliott, "Aesthetic Theory and the Experience of Art," in *Aesthetics*, ed. Harold Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 152.

53. Gurney, *Power of Sound*, 337.

54. Carl Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik* (Laaber: Laaber, 1988), 240.

55. Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, 242.

56. Compare the account of the Classical Style in Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972).

57. Here dance, which is essentially rhythmic and has a closer connection with music than does liturgy, for example, may be regarded as itself a musical rather than an extramusical use of music. I thank an audience for this paper at the University of South Carolina for noting this point.

58. Reported by Therese Devrient in her memoirs, according to Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, 245, where the remark is cited without footnote; my translation.

59. Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, 248.

60. See Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 49; and Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, 236–39, especially the claim that for Hegel "Beethovens Grösse . . . ins Verhängnis führte" (239).

61. Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, 238 (my translation).

62. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, preface, 16.

63. Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, 33.

64. *Ibid.*, 35.

65. *Ibid.*, 331.

66. See *ibid.*, 334.

67. See Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Viking, 1975), for a nice, brief account of the liberation of dissonance as the engine of the historical development of nineteenth-century music.

68. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 18.

69. John 21:24–25, Holy Bible: Authorized King James Version (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Society, n.d.), 1385.

Hegel's Theory of Tragedy

Stephen Houlgate

Tragedy and Aesthetic Individuality

Tragic drama, for Aristotle, reveals the vulnerability of human virtue. It shows how human beings can go wrong, even if they are “like ourselves” and of basically good (if not excellent) character.¹ For Hegel, by contrast, such drama shows us the tragedy inherent in situations that are specific to *art*. Of course, human life outside art can take on a form meant for art alone and thereby also give rise to tragedy. Such tragedy will not, however, be an irreducible feature of human life as such, but will result from *aestheticizing* life. Tragic drama thus teaches us not that tragedy is unavoidable, but that it stems from confusing life with art.²

Art, like religion and philosophy, is for Hegel a form of “absolute spirit” in which we articulate for ourselves what we understand to be the true nature of being and of human freedom in particular. Art’s task, however, is not to present the truth in general concepts or doctrines of faith; it entails (among other things) rendering visible to our eyes and our imagination what it is to be a free *individual*.³ Sculpture presents individual gods and mortals standing alone—calm and sublime (*PKA* 172). Poetry, by contrast, depicts a whole *world* dominated by “individual independence”: the world of the hero (*VA* 1:236–37/*A* 1:179–80). Such a world does not lack families and political communities (or “states”). Nevertheless, it is in what Hegel calls a “stateless condition,” since public interests are upheld not by settled laws and institutions, but by heroic individuals conspicuous for their strength and independence of character.⁴

The world of the hero is not best suited to guaranteeing human freedom and prosperity in real life; but it is the world best suited to art—especially poetry—because in it freedom is given concrete *individual* embodiment. It is in such a world, however, that tragedy arises. Tragedy in the fullest sense is thus generated not merely by the finitude of things or by historical conflict, but by human life that is governed by the ideal of heroic individuality.⁵ Indeed, tragic art reveals the intrinsic *limits* of heroic, individual freedom. It shows that the ideal freedom portrayed in art is in

fact a partial expression of freedom which, for all its magnificence, tragically destroys itself. Tragic art, in other words, calls into question art's own aesthetic ideal.

Greek Tragedy

In Greek tragedy, Hegel maintains, heroic individuals are motivated not just by personal passions, such as ambition or jealousy, but by an *ethical* interest or "pathos." Such ethical interests, which justify the individuals' actions, are drawn from what Hegel calls "the circle of substantial and independently justified powers" that govern the human will. They include "family love between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters; political life also, the patriotism of the citizens, the will of the ruler; and religion existent not as a piety that renounces action . . . but, on the contrary, as an active grasp and furtherance of actual interests and circumstances" (VA 3:521–23/A 2:1194–96). These interests are not only deemed by individuals to be valid; they are "justified and rational in themselves" because they are "essential needs of the human heart, the inherently necessary aims of action . . . and precisely therefore the universal, eternal, powers of spiritual existence" (VA 1:286/A 1:220). The state and the family in particular, Hegel argues, are "the purest powers" governing action in tragic drama. The conflict between them explored in Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes* and Sophocles' *Antigone* thus constitutes "a subject valid for every epoch, whose presentation, despite all national differences, continues to excite our lively human and artistic sympathy."⁶ (One should remember, however, that the state enters into tragic conflict with the family as a political community held together not by settled law and institutions, but by heroic individuals such as Eteocles or Creon.)

The fact that these ethical interests are *essential* to human freedom explains why they are associated by the Greeks with their gods. Greek tragic heroes are motivated both by an ethical pathos and by a religious reverence for the gods, and the conflicts that arise in tragic drama between ethically motivated individuals are also presented as conflicts between the gods themselves—gods who objectify for the tragic characters and for the Greek audience "people's own customs, their ethical life, the rights they have and exercise, their own spirit, their own substantiality and essentiality."⁷ If it is not handled properly, however, the relation between gods and humans in drama can threaten the freedom and independence of dramatic characters—an independence "demanded by the Ideal of art"—for it can appear that "the god commands and man has but to obey." In

genuinely tragic dramas, Hegel insists, the gods will embody the ethical interests animating the heroes, but it must be “the human individuals on whom devolve the resolution, the final decision on action, and its actual accomplishment” (VA 1:293–94/A 1:225–26). Truly tragic characters are thus innocent, insofar as they are moved to act by an ethical pathos (or a “god”), but responsible and guilty insofar as they *freely* affirm that pathos and *freely* act in accordance with its demands. Indeed, for Hegel, “a truly tragic suffering . . . is only inflicted on the individual agents as a consequence of their own deed which is both legitimate and, owing to the resulting collision, blameworthy, and for which their whole self is answerable.”⁸

There can be no tragedy, therefore, where individuals are simply at the mercy of divine or supernatural powers outside them. One cannot comprehend tragedy if one simply glorifies heroic individuality and remains blind to the ways in which it destroys itself. Equally, however, one cannot comprehend tragedy if one refuses to acknowledge that human beings enjoy individual freedom at all. To produce their tragedies, Greek dramatists thus had to have a lively sense of what is required for heroic individual freedom, as well as a clear understanding of the deepest interests of human beings.⁹

According to Hegel, the Greeks knew—just as we know—that ethical powers, such as the state and the family, can come into conflict but are not essentially at odds with one another. Despite all the suffering in human life, the state and family can be—and often are—integrated into an ordered and peaceful whole. Indeed, for Hegel, “the full reality of ethical existence” consists precisely “in harmony between these two spheres and in absence of discord between what an agent has actually to do in one and what he has to do in the other” (VA 3:544/A 2:1213).

This sense that true ethical life is peaceful and harmonious, rather than riven with conflict, is embodied in the *chorus* of Greek tragedy. The chorus, Hegel maintains, has a high regard for the “spiritual courage” of heroic individuals but does not engage in action itself because it has a deep fear of the division and conflict to which heroic action can give rise.¹⁰ Indeed, it is in its expressions of fear, as much as in its expressions of “wisdom,” that the chorus reveals its profound attachment to ethical harmony. The chorus might not seem to belong to a world governed by heroic individuality. It is, however, a necessary ingredient of a world in which heroes are animated by ethical powers (at least as such a world is represented in art) because it embodies the essential unity of those ethical powers. It constitutes the harmonious ethical community, with its own values, customs, and religious beliefs, out of which the heroes arise: “the fruitful soil out of which they grow . . . and by the existent character of which they are conditioned.”¹¹

In the heroes themselves, different ethical and religious powers are given distinct *individual* embodiment. A specific power thereby becomes the “pathos” governing the character and action of a given individual (VA 1:301/A 1:232). The problem in Greek tragic drama is that each individual is so absorbed by this governing “pathos” that he or she acts on behalf of it *alone*, and fails to respect (or even recognize) the justified pathos that moves another individual. Individuals pursuing different justified concerns thus come into conflict with one another, and the corresponding ethical powers—which are in principle in harmony—are also made to collide. For Hegel, in this conflict of ethically justified individuals there resides *tragedy*. Tragedy in Greek drama arises, therefore, when one individual in the furtherance of his or her own justified aim *violates* the right or justified interest of another. Such tragedy is not an inevitability in human life. It results from the fact that *ethical* powers are given individual, heroic embodiment in accordance with an *aesthetic* ideal of human freedom.

Hegel outlines his understanding of Greek tragedy in the following passage:

The original essence of tragedy consists then in the fact that within such a conflict each of the opposed sides, if taken by itself, has *justification*; while each can establish the true and positive content of its own aim and character only by denying and *infringing* the equally justified power of the other. The consequence is that in its ethical life, and because of it, each is nevertheless involved in *guilt*. (VA 3:523/A 2:1196)

At its core, for Hegel, tragic action in Greek drama is *rightful*, justified action that turns into *wrongful*, guilty action by violating the rightful interests of another. Tragedy consists in doing wrong precisely in doing the right thing.

The reason why rightful action turns itself into wrongful action is that the relevant justified interest is pursued in a *one-sided* way, that is, in opposition to—indeed, to the exclusion of—another justified interest, whose rightfulness is explicitly denied or never considered in the first place: “Although the characters have a purpose which is valid in itself, they can carry it out, tragically [*tragisch*], only by pursuing it one-sidedly and so contradicting and violating someone else’s purpose” (VA 3:524/A 2:1197). Each individual is animated by *one* particular ethical interest among several, but claims to represent the *only* one that, in the circumstances, commands respect.¹²

Hegel’s account of Greek tragedy is both descriptive and normative. He thinks that the principal heroes in the plays he considers are in fact—and are presented as—justified in what they do. Antigone, for example, is

said by Hegel to have “a worthy reason for action,” and he claims that “equally Creon’s commandment is justified, insofar as the brother [Polyneices] came as the enemy of the fatherland and sought to destroy it” (VPK 95). Yet Hegel is also setting out what he understands to be required by the very essence of “original” tragedy. In this sense, his theory is normative; and if it were to be shown definitively that the actions of Creon, Eteocles, or Clytemnestra lack genuine justification, we would have to conclude that there is nothing genuinely *tragic* (at least in the Greek sense) about what they did.¹³

The essence of original tragedy, for Hegel, lies not simply in violating another’s rights, or in violating those rights in the belief that one is justified in so doing. It resides in a real contradiction: in doing wrong in doing what is, indeed, justified. Furthermore, the problem is not that the hero initially does the right thing, but afterward goes astray. Tragedy in the original Greek sense is to be found only when one action is both right and wrongful at the same time—as is the case, for example, with Orestes in Aeschylus’s *The Libation Bearers*, who “in one and the same action . . . committed an outrage and at the same time carried out complete and essential necessity” (VPR 2a:559/LPR 2:667). What is originally tragic is thus free, rightful action that perverts *itself* into wrong by its own one-sided, exclusive—indeed, often murderous—claim to legitimacy.

Yet this is only half the story. For in violating the justified interests of *another*, the tragic character is actually doing violence to an unacknowledged ethical interest of his or her *own*. Tragic characters, Hegel notes, are themselves “in the power of what they are fighting, and therefore they violate what, if they were true to their own nature, they should be honouring.” The violence they do to another is thus actually violence done to themselves, would they but admit it. A clear example of such “self-violation” is found, Hegel claims, in Sophocles’ *Antigone*:

Antigone lives under the political authority of Creon; she is herself the daughter of a King and the fiancée of Haemon [Creon’s son], so that she ought to pay obedience to the royal command. But Creon, too, as father and husband, should have respected the sacred tie of blood and not ordered anything against its pious observance. So there is immanent in both Antigone and Creon that which, respectively, they attack.¹⁴

Hegel notes that Antigone and Creon actually negate themselves in an even deeper sense than the one just outlined, for they are each crushed and ruined *by* the very “immanent” power they refuse to recognize and honor. Antigone is walled up alive by the ruler of the state, Creon, and

Creon himself is devastated and ruined by his own family, since both his son, Haemon, and his wife, Eurydice, commit suicide in the wake of Antigone's death. Consequently, Hegel states, Antigone and Creon "are gripped and shattered by something intrinsic to their own actual being." As M. W. Roche notes, therefore, "the action of each hero is shown to be not only destructive of the other but ultimately self-destructive."¹⁵ In Hegel's view, it is only such catastrophically self-destructive action that is truly tragic.

Antigone

According to Hegel, Sophocles' *Antigone* is "the absolute example furnished by tragedy."¹⁶ Several commentators have argued, however, that Hegel's interpretation of *Antigone* is seriously flawed. The disagreement between Hegel and his critics principally concerns the figure of Creon.

Hegel argues that Creon is right to issue his decree prohibiting the burial of Polyneices and to demand that Antigone obey it: "In the *Antigone* . . . the king commands that the brother [of Antigone] should not have the honour of burial . . . ; Creon's commandment is justified [*berechtigt*], insofar as the brother came as the enemy of the fatherland and sought to destroy it" (VPK 95). Creon's commandment is justified, therefore, by the fact that it is issued out of "care for the welfare of the whole city" (VA 1:287/A 1:221). Hegel says no more than this, but his position is consistent with Creon's own argument in his opening speech in the play: the city or state is like a ship on which we all depend for our well-being, and we should not honor those who seek to destroy it in the way we honor those who are its defenders.¹⁷ Hegel's contemporary, A. W. Schlegel, had called Creon's orders "tyrannical."¹⁸ Hegel insists, however, that "Creon is not a tyrant, but rather the champion of something that is also an ethical power." Creon "maintains that the law of the state, the authority of the government, must be preserved and punishment meted out for its violation," and in so doing, Hegel maintains, "Creon is not in the wrong [*Kreon hat nicht Unrecht*]" (VPR 2a:557/LPR 2:665).

On this point above all Hegel's interpretation has encountered firm disagreement. Albin Lesky puts the case against Hegel as follows:

Kreon errs. The various attempts to exonerate him as the loyal servant of the state have failed. To refuse a traitor burial in his homeland certainly corresponded to Greek custom. But Kreon does much more: he wishes

to prevent the removal of the corpse by posting guards, thus feeding the body to birds of prey. Consequently, he is rejected by his son, the city and the gods.¹⁹

Yet the issue is in fact not quite as straightforward as Lesky would have us believe, for it is never made clear in the play that guards are posted with the explicit aim of preventing the *removal* of Polyneices' body to another site. They are posted to prevent burial of the body where it lies—near the city; and burial of traitors *in or near the city* was, indeed, prohibited under ancient Greek custom or law (as Lesky acknowledges). Martha Nussbaum makes the point in language echoing that of Hegel: "Creon is within custom and justified (ignoring for the moment his family tie) insofar as he shows dishonor to the corpse and forbids its burial in or near the city."²⁰

It is true that the wording of Creon's decree (as reported by Antigone and Creon himself) does not specify explicitly that burial *in or near the city* (as opposed to anywhere else) is prohibited. It simply states that Polyneices' body should be left "unburied"; and insofar as this decree is taken to imply that burial *anywhere* at all is prohibited, it does indeed go beyond Greek custom, as Nussbaum points out.²¹ Yet, remarkably, neither Antigone nor Creon (nor any other character) ever considers the possibility of burying the body far away from the city, so Creon's decree is never invoked explicitly to prevent such remote interment. The issue simply never arises in the play. Consequently, although Creon does proclaim that Polyneices should remain unburied *tout court*, his decree is understood by all concerned to prohibit burial of the body *where it now lies*—near the city; and such a prohibition—at least from the point of view of the city—is consistent with Greek custom and justified. As Nussbaum observes, Creon is "outside of custom in his attempt to obstruct *all* efforts at burial (though the issues are blurred here, since the attempt he obstructs involved burial near the city and would thus be illegal under Athenian law)."²²

Nussbaum also observes that Creon is clearly acting for the benefit of the city and out of respect for Zeus.²³ Her interpretation of the character of Creon thus lends direct support to Hegel: Creon is justified in prohibiting the burial of Polyneices in or near the city, in the interests of upholding civic values and the honor of the city-state. The evident fact that Creon displays petulance in his dialogue with Haemon should not obscure the legitimacy—from the perspective of the city—of his initial decree.

It is also worth noting that, from Hegel's point of view, it does not matter that "Creon does not put into action an established law of the state, but *issues a decree*."²⁴ In a heroic world, the security of the state depends

upon the strength and wisdom of a single individual. The decree of a ruler, who pursues the welfare of the city or state in accordance with accepted custom, thus *is* the law and must be respected—as the chorus makes clear: “This resolution, Creon, is your own, in the matter of the traitor and the true. For you can make such rulings as you will about the living and about the dead.”²⁵

Since Creon's decree is legitimate and such decrees constitute laws of the state that command respect, Antigone—at least from the city's point of view—must be wrong to violate it. Nussbaum does not go quite this far, however. She endorses Hegel's criticism of Antigone's “neglect of the civic,” but claims that even though Creon is justified in issuing his decree, “Antigone's actual choice is . . . distinctly superior to Creon's” and shows her to be “morally superior” to him. Hegel, by contrast, is clear that Antigone as “the daughter of a King . . . ought to pay obedience to the royal command” (VA 3:549/A 2:1217). The chorus appears to voice the same opinion when it tells Antigone that in her punishment she has “found the high foundation of justice.”²⁶

Yet this is to consider matters solely from the perspective of the city-state. Hegel also insists unequivocally that, from the perspective of family piety and the lower gods, Creon is in the wrong and Antigone in the right: “Creon . . . as father and husband, should have respected the sacred tie of blood and not ordered anything against its pious observance” (VA 3:549/A 2:1217). Antigone, on the other hand, has “a worthy reason for action” (VPK 95) and cannot leave her brother “unburied, a prey of the birds” (VA 1:287/A 1:221).

This aspect of Hegel's interpretation of *Antigone* is one with which few readers of the play would disagree. As Lesky is only too eager to point out: “Kreon errs.” The problem is that critics such as Lesky see only one side of the issue (much like the principal protagonists in the play themselves). They do not comprehend that Creon might err precisely in doing what is right and justified. Yet, for Hegel, *that* is Creon's tragedy, as it is Antigone's. The issue for Hegel is not whether Creon is in the wrong. He clearly *is* in the wrong; as Lesky notes, this is affirmed by Haemon, Teiresias, Eurydice, and eventually the chorus and Creon himself.²⁷ Yet Hegel's great insight is that Creon does wrong in the very act of doing what is right.

Nussbaum's recognition of the ambiguity in Creon's decree allows us to understand how this can be (though Hegel himself does not put the point in exactly these terms). Creon issues a single decree: Polyneices' body is to be left unburied. This decree, however, is in fact double-edged. Insofar as it prohibits the burial of a traitor in or near the city, it is right and justified; but insofar as it prohibits a sister from burying her brother

at all, it violates the law of family piety and is wrong. One and the same edict is thus justified in one respect and unjustified in another.²⁸

The same is true of Antigone's act of spreading dust on her brother's corpse and pouring libations for him. Insofar as this act honors a dead family member, it is justified, indeed, demanded by the lower gods; but insofar as it constitutes an act of defiance of a legitimate edict by the ruler, it is wrong. Creon and Antigone are thus each equally wrong-in-being-right, and so even though some might think Antigone to be a more beautiful figure than Creon, they are, from Hegel's point of view, equally tragic.²⁹

It should be recalled that Hegel is not aiming to offer an exhaustive literary analysis of *Antigone*. He says nothing about the language of the play, little about the relations between male and female characters, and nothing at all about Creon's descent into petulance in the scene with Haemon.³⁰ Hegel's concern is, rather, to examine the play in the light of his normative theory of tragedy in order to determine the degree to which Creon and Antigone are genuinely tragic characters. And in this respect, I believe, Hegel's reading is insightful. He shows that, contrary to the opinion of A. W. Schlegel, *Antigone* presents a clash not between a tyrant and a heroine of "the purest femininity," but between two equally one-sided and blinkered tragic figures.³¹ Antigone and Creon are both justified in what they do, but each sees only the rightness of his or her own position, and so fails to recognize any legitimacy in the position of the other. They thus both pursue their justified aims by *violating* the aim of the other, an aim equally deserving of respect. In so doing each one turns a rightful act into one that is wrongful and guilty, and therein lies the *tragedy* in their action. Tragically, they each do wrong to one another (and, indeed, to a neglected aspect of their own ethical identity) precisely because they believe that they *alone* are doing what is right and that they are doing *only* what is right. Both are blinded by their own sense of rightfulness.

Nussbaum agrees that "Creon and Antigone are one-sided, narrow, in their pictures of what matters" and that "the concerns of each show us important values that the other has refused to take into account." On this issue, she concludes, "Hegel's famous and frequently abused reading is correct" (though of the two, as I noted above, she finds Antigone to be "morally superior").³² There is nonetheless a subtle difference between Nussbaum and Hegel. For Nussbaum, catastrophic conflict arises when individuals fail to recognize that fundamental values may, quite properly, be in *tension* with one another. From a Hegelian point of view, by contrast, what Creon and Antigone fail to look for is a way to *harmonize* their different interests.³³ Hegel does not suggest how such a harmonization could actually have been achieved within the play; but Nussbaum herself (and

others) point out that it could have been attained by burying Polyneices far away from the city.³⁴ The tragedy is that both Antigone and Creon remain blind to—or refuse to countenance—this possibility.

The equality between Antigone and Creon is obscured by the fact that Creon eventually admits his wrong, whereas Antigone does not.³⁵ To my mind, however, Hegel is right to claim that Sophocles' play presents them as equal in their justification and their one-sided adherence to their own point of view. They are both wedded so closely to their own interests that they do not appreciate the wrong they do to one another in the very right that they do. Nor do they see—or want to see—the possibility of a compromise between them: neither is willing to bend in the direction of the other or to yield to the other in any way. Indeed, it is not just the characters' one-sidedness that is the problem in the play, it is their insistent, *unyielding* one-sidedness.

In Hegel's view, such unwillingness to yield or relent—what he calls the “tragic firmness” (*tragische Festigkeit*) of will (VA 3:532/A 2:1203)—is a characteristic of all truly tragic characters. It is this “firmness” or inflexibility that drives tragic conflict on toward a tragic, catastrophic *outcome* (*Ausgang*). What happens in such an outcome is that individuals who disrupt the harmony of ethical life, or prevent its being realized, are destroyed or “negated” (*aufgehoben*). Individuals suffer this fate, Hegel maintains, because their “*one-sided* particularity” will not “adapt itself to this harmony” (*sich dieser Harmonie . . . fügen*) or “let go of [*ablassen von*] itself and its intentions” (VA 3:524/A 2:1197).

The essence of Greek tragedy thus consists not just in a tragic conflict between justified interests in which each violates the other, but in the *relentless* pursuit of that conflict which leads to the destruction or ruin of the individuals involved. Accordingly, what makes individuals fully tragic is not only their one-sidedness, but the fact that they cling on so insistently to their one-sided pathos and will not, *of their own accord*, compromise with or yield to another. In this respect, it seems to me, Hegel's understanding of tragedy overlaps tightly with that of Sophocles himself in *Antigone*.

Hegel's own explicit remarks about Sophocles' play concentrate on the fact that Antigone and Creon “both are in the wrong because they are one-sided, but both . . . also in the right” (VPR 2a:558/LPR 2:665). If we look at the play more closely through Hegelian eyes, however, what comes to the fore is the fact that both are also equally *unyielding*. The first thing the chorus says about Antigone, for example, is that “she cannot yield [*eikein*] to trouble,” and Creon immediately spells out the consequences of such an unyielding stance: “These rigid spirits are the first to fall. The strongest iron, hardened in the fire, most often ends in scraps and shatterings.”³⁶ Later, of course, we see the consequences of Creon's failure to

heed his own words, but the truth of those words is never challenged in the play. After Antigone has been condemned by Creon, the chorus asserts that she has destroyed herself through her own “self-sufficiency” or “self-willed passion,” and this judgment is never retracted.³⁷

If Antigone destroys herself through her own relentlessness, Haemon movingly reminds Creon that his unwillingness to give way threatens the very ship of state that he is concerned to protect: “The ship that will not slacken sail, the sheet drawn tight, unyielding, overturns. She ends the voyage with her keel on top.” And he urges Creon: “Yield [*eike*] your wrath, allow a change of stand.”³⁸ The same theme is repeated with even greater forcefulness by Teiresias, once Antigone has been entombed: “All men may err but error once committed, he’s no fool nor yet unfortunate, who gives up his stiffness and cures the trouble he has fallen in. Stubbornness and stupidity are twins. Yield [*eike*] to the dead.” Creon, however, finds yielding the hardest thing to do: “to yield is dreadful” (*to t’eikathein gar deinon*), as he famously laments. And when he does eventually yield, it is too late: Antigone is dead and with her his own son, Haemon.³⁹ The chorus, once more, blames no one but the suffering individual himself: “His own hand brings the witness of his crime, the doom he brought on himself.” In contrast to Antigone, however, Creon agrees with the chorus and accepts his guilt.⁴⁰

Hegel’s theory of tragedy is thought by some to be best suited to Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*, and it certainly fits that trilogy well.⁴¹ In my judgment, however, Sophocles’ *Antigone* is the quintessentially “Hegelian” Greek tragedy. This is because it shows so clearly two tragic characters pursuing justified aims, but destroying themselves through their free and resolute refusal to *yield* to one another or, as Hegel puts it, to “let go” of themselves and their purposes (VA 3:524/A 2:1197).

Oedipus Rex

Both Aristotle and Hegel believe that tragedy is generated by human action, not by contingent, external circumstances.⁴² Furthermore, both believe that tragedy befalls characters who are good, though not immaculately so. For Aristotle, however, tragedy arises because a good person *departs* from his or her settled goodness by committing (or almost committing) some terrible mistake or error in judgment.⁴³ For Hegel, on the other hand, it arises because a person’s consistent and unswerving pursuit of the good *turns itself* into wrong through its own one-sidedness. Aristotle contends, therefore, that tragic dramas show us how even good and noble

characters are vulnerable to going wrong through their own agency—a vulnerability which, Nussbaum argues, is an unavoidable feature of all but the most excellent virtue.⁴⁴ Hegel implies, by contrast, that tragedy is avoidable if individuals are prepared to let go of their own justified interests and give way to one another.

Hegel and Aristotle differ in another respect. For Aristotle, tragic characters suffer because of errors they commit (or almost commit) knowingly *or* unknowingly. For Hegel, tragic characters suffer because they knowingly and deliberately cling on to themselves and their own pathos and so bring ruin upon themselves. This leads the two philosophers to different interpretations of the tragedy of Oedipus. For Aristotle, Oedipus goes wrong by murdering his father and marrying his mother in complete ignorance of what he has done. Since this is the core of Oedipus's tragedy, Aristotle argues, "the relevant incident occurs outside the action" of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.⁴⁵ For Hegel, however, the tragedy of Oedipus is somewhat different.

At first sight it might not look as if Oedipus fits Hegel's model of a truly tragic character at all: even on Hegel's own account, Oedipus is not caught up in a conflict between two strictly *ethical* powers. Hegel argues, however, that Oedipus does act in accordance with a certain right and, in so doing, violates another right he should have respected. The right that Oedipus justifiably claims for himself is what Hegel calls the "right of the wide awake consciousness" (VA 3:545/A 2:1214). This is the right to recognize only what one *knows* one has done. What Oedipus violates is the equal right of the *unknown* and *unconscious* to be accorded recognition (VPR 2a:558/LPR 2:666). For Hegel, Oedipus's tragic violation of the right of the unconscious to be acknowledged by consciousness occurs within, rather than outside of, Sophocles' drama.

In killing his father and marrying his mother before the play begins, Oedipus obviously violates the ethical duty to respect family ties. This violation is wholly unwitting and innocent, but Oedipus comes to accept responsibility for it once it has been disclosed.⁴⁶ Unlike Aristotle, however, Hegel does not locate the tragedy of Oedipus specifically in the terrible harm he does to his family. This is because Oedipus does not do the awful deeds *as a consequence of* consciously and deliberately insisting on his right to recognize only what he knows he has done.

Hegel notes, furthermore, that by themselves Oedipus's "unconsciously committed crimes do not make him unhappy." What causes him to suffer is rather his own *consciously* unrelenting pursuit of the truth within the play which leads to the disclosure of those crimes. As Hegel puts it, Oedipus "forcibly extracts [*zwingt heraus*] a knowledge of his own dark fate and acquires the dreadful realization that it has been accomplished

in himself.” Oedipus is quite justified in committing himself to bring to light the murderer of Laius. He is, after all, “the seer” and “the one who excels in knowing.” He is also justified in claiming to be “stranger to the story as stranger to the deed,” since he knows nothing of having been involved in Laius’s murder himself. Yet in pursuing the truth so insistently and self-consciously, Oedipus tragically neglects the possibility that he may “stand in the power of the unconscious” and that there may be something about himself of which he is—and perhaps should take care to remain—unaware.⁴⁷

Clearly, Oedipus cannot be blamed for his ignorance of what he has done to his parents. He is responsible, however, for neglecting the very possibility of his own ignorance: for, by insisting that he need recognize only what he knows he has done, he *blinds himself* to the possibility that he has done anything unconsciously. He thus freely presses on when Jocasta advises him not to “hunt this out,” and eventually brings the devastating truth about himself out into the open.⁴⁸ This, in Hegel’s eyes, is the tragedy of Oedipus within Sophocles’ play: in his unshakeable, justified conviction that he is innocent, Oedipus fails to see that even the most knowing should be on their guard against the unconscious and the unknown, and so brings ruin upon himself through his own insistent, blinkered pursuit of the truth.⁴⁹

In freely and consciously seeking to uncover the truth, Oedipus blinds himself completely to the possibility that he has done something unconsciously (even though Teiresias does tell him).⁵⁰ Antigone and Creon, by contrast, know full well that they are refusing to recognize a claim made against them by the other. Nevertheless, Antigone, Creon, Orestes, and Clytemnestra are in fact similar to Oedipus, for their unswerving sense of justification also prevents them from seeing any right on the side of those they oppose. In this sense, every truly tragic Greek hero, for Hegel, is blinded by his or her own free and conscious insistence on being right. Even when he directly resists the claims of another, his violation of the other’s rights is thus always in one respect unwitting, since he does not see that there is any genuine *right* there to be violated.

Reconciliation

For Aristotle, the sight of a tragic *hamartia* or “going-wrong” causes the audience to feel pity and fear: pity for the heroes because their suffering, as the result of actions that are out of character, is ultimately undeserved, and fear that we ourselves might be at risk of going wrong in a similar way.

The distinctive pleasure afforded by tragedy stems from the fact that the arousal of such emotions brings about the *catharsis* of these very emotions.⁵¹ Such Aristotelian “catharsis,” as I understand it, does not entail the purification or ennoblement of the emotions (as Hegel believes). Rather, it involves the cleansing release of the emotions that comes from letting them flow freely in the safe environment of the theater. The effect of tragedy for Aristotle might thus be compared to that of a good sing: it arouses and releases emotions to leave one refreshed and restored.⁵²

The pleasure associated with tragedy by Hegel is quite different. It lies in a profound sense of *reconciliation* that is (or should be) produced in the audience by the events on stage. Spectators feel reconciled with—and so satisfied, rather than merely shattered, by—the course of action that unfolds before them, when they are able to recognize the ruin of the tragic characters as the work not of blind fate or divine arbitrariness but of “eternal justice” and “absolute rationality” (VA 3:526, 547/A 2:1198, 1215).

Tragedy arises in Greek drama because heroic individuals animated by one-sided ethical interests come into conflict and so set different aspects of ethical life, such as the state and the family, at odds with one another. Reason and justice, however, “cannot suffer the conflict and contradiction of naturally harmonious ethical powers to be victorious and permanent in truth and actuality,” but demand that the harmony between the ethical powers be restored within the drama (VA 3:526/A 2:1198). If such harmony is to be reestablished, Hegel claims, then the *one-sided* expression or embodiment of the ethical powers in opposed heroic individuals must be brought to an end or “stripped away” (*abgestreift*). Yet if—as in *Antigone*—the heroic individuals concerned will not give up the one-sided pursuit of their ethical pathos, then putting an end to the one-sided oppositional embodiment of the ethical powers must involve the sacrifice or “stripping away” of the *individuals* themselves: “If the one-sidedness is to be cancelled, it is the individual, since he has acted solely as this *one* pathos, who must be got rid of and sacrificed” (VA 3:547, 549/A 2:1215, 1217). In such cases reason and justice demand the death or ruin of the tragic individuals; and the fact that the destruction of the heroes is recognized to be *rational* and ethically *just* allows the spectators to feel reconciled to it, rather than merely devastated. (We can even feel reconciled to the downfall of Oedipus, since “nemesis”—if not eternal, ethical justice—demands that the powers of both consciousness *and* unconsciousness be recognized.)⁵³

Yet if Greek tragic figures, such as Antigone and Creon, are destroyed by “justice” and “reason,” can we still say that they bring ruin upon *themselves*? Yes, for it is precisely in bringing about their *own* ruin that tragic characters serve as the agents of justice. In violating an opposing

ethical power, tragic characters summon up that power against themselves and are violated by it in turn (VA 3:523, 525/A 2:1196, 1198). Creon, for example, “punishes Antigone and violates piety, [and] by this he is himself violated” since his son, Haemon, dies with her. Hegel observes, however, that a figure such as Creon is not simply destroyed by the actions of *others*: he brings suffering down upon his own head. Furthermore, he is made to suffer by the representatives of an ethical power which actually forms part of his own ethical identity. Consequently, through violating family piety “the king [Creon] violates himself” (*verletzt der König sich selbst*). The same holds for Antigone: “Antigone belongs to the state and acts against it; this violation equally violates her and kills her” (VPK 306).

In *Antigone*, therefore, the goal of justice is achieved only because the one-sided protagonists bring about their *own* destruction—and so strip themselves away—through their refusal to compromise. At the end of the play the two ethical powers—family and state—do not emerge as explicitly reconciled with one another; all we are left with is the spectacle of death and devastation. In Hegel’s view, however, in the very self-destruction of the two one-sidedly ethical protagonists the audience sees that *both* ethical perspectives have been accorded equal recognition and that justice has thereby been done. The spheres of the family and the state are thus reconciled in the minds of the spectators, if not explicitly on stage (see VPK 306–7).

Our feelings at the close of *Antigone*—or of *Seven Against Thebes*—are therefore complex. We are horrified by the death or ruin of the principal protagonists, but we also find satisfaction in the justice of their fate. We are, as Hegel puts it, “shattered by the fate of the heroes but reconciled fundamentally” (VA 3:547/A 2:1215). Herein, for Hegel, lies the distinctive pleasure to be found in Greek tragedy. Indeed, to see such rational justice at work in human action is precisely “to comprehend tragedy” (VAB 325). In this sense, tragedy fulfills a central purpose of all genuine art: to grant us a sense of reconciliation and “being-at-home-in-the-world” by showing us in an aesthetic medium the reconciling work of reason.⁵⁴

Hegel points out that tragedies can also show the triumph of justice without the death or devastation of the protagonists. At the end of Aeschylus’s *Eumenides*, for example, Orestes is not condemned but acquitted, and the Furies are not ruined but welcomed into Athens as the bringers of blessing. Yet justice is done because Apollo (who commanded Orestes to take his mother’s life) and the Furies are *both* accorded honor and the conflict between them is resolved. At the close of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* the intransigent will of the eponymous hero is “broken” by Heracles, and he rejoins the Greeks to help them defeat the Trojans. He is in turn

promised healing and “the prize of valor.” Justice once again is done (since Philoctetes and the Greeks are reunited) but no one dies.⁵⁵

Despite their “happy” endings, both plays are described by Hegel as “tragedies” (VA 3:532/A 2:1204). This is because their principal characters *violate* (or have previously violated) one another’s rights in pursuit of their own, and remain quite unyielding in their continued insistence on the exclusive rightness of their cause.⁵⁶ Indeed, it is their very intransigence that prompts a third party—Heracles or Athena—to ensure that the demands of justice are met and that, contrary to the protagonists’ governing desires, *both* sides are given equal honor and respect. Furthermore, these characters retain something of their intransigence even *after* the gods have intervened on behalf of justice. Orestes departs feeling vindicated and the Furies are moved to become friends of Athens not by any spirit of compromise or forgiveness, but by Athena’s promise of honor. Similarly, Philoctetes shows no evidence of a real change of heart toward the Greeks, but simply agrees not to disobey Heracles, who tells him he should go with Neoptolemus and Odysseus to Troy. *The Eumenides* and *Philoctetes* are thus both tragedies that present the conflict between two justified but unbending points of view, and that satisfy us by concluding with the triumph of reconciling justice.

In Hegel’s view, however, neither of these plays constitutes a tragedy in the full sense, because neither has a genuinely tragic conclusion in which the ends of justice are achieved through the sacrifice, or rather *self-destruction*, of the individuals concerned. Tragedy in the full sense should leave us not only satisfied that justice prevails but also shattered by the fate of the heroes. This again confirms that *Antigone*, rather than the *Oresteia*, should be regarded as the quintessential “Hegelian” Greek tragedy.

Modern Tragedy

For Hegel, the essence of Greek tragedy lies in relentlessly pursuing one’s own justified interest and in so doing *negating oneself* in various ways. First of all, the tragic hero turns his own justified action into a *wrong* by violating the rights of another. Second, in violating the interests of another, the tragic hero does violence to a neglected aspect of his *own* ethical life. Third, through his own intransigent—and therefore guilty—violation of the rights of another, the tragic hero condemns himself to suffer justice at the hands of the neglected power and so, ultimately, destroys or ruins *himself* through his refusal to yield. The tragedy of Eteocles, Agamemnon,

Clytemnestra, Antigone, and Creon (and also Oedipus) is thus that they destroy themselves precisely in doing what is *right* and *justified* (and indeed, usually sanctioned by a god). And they do so because they recognize no right but their own, and so bring justice, vengeance, and ruin down upon their own heads.

In modern, post-Reformation tragedy, Hegel maintains, characters are moved to action not by an ethical concern, but rather by a “personal passion,” such as ambition or jealousy, which they pursue with all the “power of their subjectivity.”⁵⁷ Indeed, the modern tragic character is often prepared to commit what he knows to be a crime to achieve his goal (VA 3:536, 557/A 2:1207, 1224). Nevertheless, modern tragedy overlaps with Greek tragedy insofar as the central characters are not the passive victims of fate, chance, or inheritance but individuals who *destroy themselves* through their own action. Modern characters are more exposed to and affected by contingent circumstances than their Greek counterparts, but they too suffer a “self-prepared ruin” (VA 2:202/A 1:579). Furthermore, such individuals destroy themselves—as do the Greeks—because of their “decisive adherence [*Festhalten*] to themselves and their aims,” that is, because they pursue their aims unrelentingly. Such characters may waver before acting (like Macbeth), but once committed they pursue their passion or suspicion with a terrible consistency; and it is this unwillingness to relent or yield that tragically plunges them into catastrophe.⁵⁸

Yet tragedy resides not merely in self-destructive action, but in the self-destructive actions of individuals whom we *admire*.⁵⁹ In Greek tragedy, we admire and respect the character’s ethical stance. In modern (especially Shakespearean) tragedy, we admire “the greatness of the characters who by their imagination or disposition and aptitude display the full wealth of their heart, and their elevation over their situations and actions” (VA 3:536, 561–62/A 2:1206, 1227–28). In both cases, what is distinctively tragic is the sight of such admirable characters destroying themselves.

Tragedy goes even deeper than this, however. It lies in the fact that one of the qualities we admire in heroic individuals is *itself* responsible for leading them to catastrophe. In both modern and Greek tragedy, Hegel suggests, part of what we admire about heroic individuals is the very unyielding heroism that destroys them. In Shakespeare’s plays, we are told, it is precisely the characters’ “taut firmness and one-sidedness that is supremely admirable” (VA 2:200/A 1:577), and elsewhere Hegel claims that “firmness and decisiveness” belong generally to the “ideal presentation of character” (VA 1:312/A 1:240). As this last quotation reminds us, our specific admiration for the heroic relentlessness of tragic characters is *aesthetic*, not ethical. We endorse the ethical pathos of Antigone, but we also see a certain “sculptural” beauty in her firm and unwavering sense of jus-

tification. In the case of Macbeth and Othello, we condemn their ruthless ambition or groundless jealousy, but we nonetheless also see in them a certain strength and energy of character that we cannot but find magnificent.

Our attitude to tragic characters is, accordingly, ambiguous: we are both spellbound *and* dismayed by their heroic refusal to compromise or relent. This, indeed, is what lies at the heart of truly tragic drama, in Hegel's view: the spectacle of (ethically or otherwise) admirable individuals destroying themselves through the very heroic inflexibility that makes them—from an aesthetic point of view—so impressive and magnetic. For Hegel, therefore, tragic drama presents the self-destruction of the *aesthetic ideal* of the good or great character. Its lesson is that however magnificent unyielding individual heroism is judged to be aesthetically, true goodness and greatness are not to be found in such heroism.⁶⁰

In modern tragedy, as in Greek tragedy, the death of impressively unrelenting characters is felt to be not only shattering but also just and rational. The nature of the justice at work in each case is, however, somewhat different. Greek tragic justice is ethical, since it ensures that, with the destruction of the heroes, the ethical powers which animated them are accorded equal recognition and so reconciled. Modern tragic justice, by contrast, is “colder, more like criminal justice.” It leaves us with no sense that ethical harmony has been restored. What reconciles us to the death of Macbeth or Richard III is simply the thought that they “deserve for their atrocities nothing better than what happens to them.”⁶¹ Beyond this, Hegel claims, the only sense of reconciliation that can be associated with modern tragedy is to be found in the minds of the tragic figures themselves. They feel reconciled *either* because they feel assured of a “higher and indestructible bliss” beyond the grave, *or* because they remain unrepentant, and so preserve “the strength and equanimity” of character in the face of all that confronts them, *or* because they themselves recognize the justness of their downfall (VA 3:566/A 2:1231). The effect of modern tragedy is thus not simply to leave the audience distressed, for in recognizing both that the fate of the individuals is a just one and that the characters are themselves reconciled to it in some way, the audience is also able to find satisfaction in the tragedy that has unfolded.

The feeling of satisfaction that justice has been done is, for Hegel, central to the experience of all tragedy. Indeed, there can be no recognition of *tragedy* without it. This association of tragedy with justice and reason does not stem from any desire on Hegel's part to mask the real horror of tragic action.⁶² On the contrary, it stems from Hegel's acute understanding of precisely what it is that makes tragic action so horrifying: the fact that great characters have actually brought suffering and destruction *upon themselves* through their free and insistent pursuit of their own interest. We

feel devastated by this fact, yet we cannot but recognize reason and justice in it as well. That a feeling of satisfaction is produced in this way by the very outcome that causes us such profound pain explains why, in a Hegelian view, we are able to *enjoy* the terrible spectacle of tragic suffering.⁶³

The Drama of Yielding and Forgiveness

Not all suffering and destruction counts as tragic for Hegel. Tragic suffering is caused not by blind fate, the cruelty of the gods, or uncontrollable natural forces, but by human action. Specifically, it is the suffering that characters who are in some way great or admirable bring upon themselves through the unyielding pursuit of their own aims. Truly tragic figures are those, such as Antigone, Creon, Oedipus, and Macbeth, who (as Hegel puts it) cannot “let go of” (*ablassen von*) themselves and their own intentions, and who destroy themselves in the process (VA 3:524/A 2:1197).

Tragic catastrophe can, however, be avoided if the principal characters “give up their one-sidedness” and desist from pursuing their own aims at all costs. When this actually occurs in Greek drama, the tragic characters do not relent of their own accord but are commanded or persuaded to do so by a god. Furthermore, although, for example, the Furies (in *The Eumenides*) and Philoctetes comply with the divine entreaties or demands, they experience no change of heart and are not—at least within the dramas themselves—inwardly reconciled with their former adversaries. But for the intervention of the god, therefore, these plays would reach a tragic, possibly deadly, conclusion, and are thus still regarded by Hegel as “tragedies,” albeit not in the full, catastrophic sense.⁶⁴

By contrast, in certain modern dramas—which Hegel calls simply “plays” (*Schauspiele*)—tragedy is avoided because the characters do undergo a change of heart and yield to one another inwardly and *of their own accord* (even if this occurs in response to persuasion by another). In such cases, no *deus ex machina* is required to effect the peaceful resolution of the conflict, but it is “the individuals themselves who are led in the course of their own action to this cessation of strife and to the mutual reconciliation of their aims or characters” (VA 3:533/A 2:1204). The poetic masterpiece in this genre, Hegel maintains, is Goethe’s *Iphigenie auf Tauris*.

In Euripides’ version of the play, after King Thoas has ordered that Iphigenia and her brother, Orestes, be killed, the goddess Athena simply *commands* Thoas to allow them to return to Greece, and the king obeys because he knows that it would be foolish not to.⁶⁵ In Goethe’s play the danger is slightly different: it is not that Iphigenie faces death herself, but

that she will be forced to sacrifice her brother to Diana. The resolution of the dramatic conflict is also different. There is no god to command Thoas to desist; rather, Iphigenie trusts that her own voice—the “voice of truth and humanity”—will turn Thoas around and persuade him to let her and her brother go.⁶⁶ In so doing, Iphigenie places her faith in Thoas’ ability to hear and respond to that voice: “She calls on his magnanimity and clemency, trusting on the height of his dignity.” And, as we see, Iphigenie’s faith is well placed: Thoas is “inwardly” converted and lets the two siblings depart, not just grudgingly but with a fond “Farewell!” (*Lebt wohl!*).⁶⁷ Goethe’s play shows, therefore, that potentially tragic conflicts can be overcome—without the need for a *deus ex machina*—if the characters concerned are prepared to trust in and yield to one another. It reveals the profound truth that “despite all differences and conflicts of characters and their interests and passions, human action can nevertheless produce a fully harmonious actuality.”⁶⁸

Hegel’s interpretation of Goethe’s play assumes that Iphigenie is able to bring about a real change in Thoas—to move and convert him through her readiness to put her trust in truth and Thoas himself. Nicholas Boyle argues, however, that no *conversion* actually takes place. Thoas remains the “disciple of truth” throughout the play and is not brought back from “barbarism” to a sense of “humanity” by Iphigenie. Indeed, since the “hegemony of the heart” is already established in Thoas when Iphigenie makes her appeal to him to be allowed to leave, there is no real risk that the appeal will be rejected; and so there is no real risk of tragedy.⁶⁹

A somewhat similar position is taken by Erich Heller, who argues that there is no real evil in the world of the play for Iphigenie to overcome, and that “Iphigenie would not do what she does . . . if her vision of life really comprehended the possibility of her having to put her brother to death.” For Heller, indeed, Iphigenie “stands for the impossibility of tragedy.”⁷⁰

To my mind, however, there is a genuine danger of tragedy in Goethe’s play. Thoas is angered by Iphigenie’s refusal (earlier in the play) to marry him, and he is consequently filled with what R. C. Ockenden calls a “bloodthirsty determination” to force her (or one of her followers) to sacrifice her brother.⁷¹ Moreover, contrary to the opinion of Boyle and Heller, Iphigenie is well aware of this and so takes a real risk in appealing to Thoas’ sense of humanity.⁷² The fact that this risk is real confirms, in turn, that Iphigenie brings about a genuine conversion in Thoas: she turns him away from his angry insistence on barbaric human sacrifice toward the trust and humane feeling that she herself has come to embody. T. J. Reed puts the point well: Goethe’s play shows “the triumph of Iphigenie’s human initiative in a dangerously open situation.” It reveals the

power of her trust and openness to overcome the real potential for tragedy—"the victory of humane actions over tragic possibilities."⁷³

Yet it is also true that there must be a real potential for *humane action* within Thoas, if Iphigenie's appeal is to be heard by him. Iphigenie cannot release in Thoas (or indeed, imbue him with) a sense of humanity if he doesn't have it within him to feel such a sense. Iphigenie releases this potential in Thoas precisely by trusting (and showing that she trusts) that it is, indeed, there (VA 1:297/A 1:229; VAB 86). This does not, however, make her conversion of Thoas any less real; it simply shows that, for all his barbarian hard-heartedness, Thoas has it within him to be converted.

Iphigenie herself believes that this potential for humane action is present in everyone "through whose breast the source of life flows pure and unhindered"—which may or may not mean absolutely everybody.⁷⁴ Hegel, however, appears to believe that some people can close off their inner potential for humane action by—tragically—refusing to yield to others. That, at least, is the implication behind Hegel's claim that a resolution such as we find in a modern *Schauspiel* is possible only where "the tragic fixity of will" has been "softened [*erweicht*]" (VA 3:532/A 2:1203). A *deus ex machina* can command a tragically intransigent will that "persists in its pathos" (VA 3:550/A 2:1219) to desist from pursuing that pathos to the bitter end (though even in such a case, the hero must be prepared to obey). Iphigenie's "inward heart" (VA 1:299/A 1:230), however, can only turn around a soul that, despite its very real potential for tragic inflexibility, is *willing to yield of its own accord*, if the appropriate appeal is made to it. In this sense there is some truth in Heller's position: Iphigenie does not confront real *evil* in Thoas; nor, indeed, does she confront truly tragic intransigence in him (though there is a real danger that Thoas will force a tragic outcome, and Iphigenie does take a risk). For this reason, *Iphigenie auf Tauris* is not regarded by Hegel as a *tragedy* with a peaceful conclusion, but rather as a dramatic *play*.⁷⁵

Hegel's claim is thus not that Iphigenie's human (and humane) initiative can overcome the resistance of any human will and so avoid all tragic catastrophe. In certain dramatic situations, Iphigenie would be powerless and a tragic outcome unavoidable. There is, however, no deep metaphysical reason why this should be: no "eternal contradiction" at the heart of things consigning heroic individuals to death and destruction.⁷⁶ The reason a tragic outcome is sometimes unavoidable is simply because one or more of the protagonists *will not yield* (and there is no *deus ex machina* to make them). A tragic outcome is made necessary, therefore, by the characters' own *free* insistence on pursuing their own interests relentlessly. Any such necessary, unavoidable tragic outcome could, therefore, always be avoided, if only the characters involved would—like Iphigenie and Thoas—consider trusting and yielding to one another in some way.⁷⁷

It would be naïve to imagine that in many tragic conflicts the protagonists could in fact easily be brought to yield. Indeed, Hegel believes that in ancient Greek drama the heroes make it well-nigh impossible for themselves to yield or compromise voluntarily because they identify so completely with their respective justified interests (VA 3:522, 546/A 2:1195, 1214). In Hegel's view, however, this should not obscure the fact that social, political, and personal harmony is a real possibility for human beings and that even Greek heroes, in their very insistence on being right, retain the ineliminable *freedom* to pursue such harmony if they so choose.

In his 1823 lectures on aesthetics, Hegel remarks on another alternative to tragedy: the drama of forgiveness (though he cites no specific examples).⁷⁸ In such a drama a tragic, destructive conclusion is avoided not because a misdeed is prevented from happening, but rather because the human spirit, within its own interiority, *undoes* (*aufhebt*) what has been done and forgives itself or is forgiven (VPK 309). No retribution is exacted for misdeeds committed, and reconciliation is achieved at the end of the play.

The spirit of forgiveness that Hegel finds in certain modern dramas is clearly a secularized version of religious forgiveness. Indeed, Hegel uses the same language when discussing both: to feel forgiven by God or by another human being (or oneself) is in each case to feel that "what has been done is made undone" (*das Geschehene ungeschehen gemacht wird*) and so is no longer held against one, and to feel that, with the retrospective undoing of one's deed, one is reconciled with those whom one has harmed.⁷⁹ This means, however, that dramatic forgiveness is subject to the same limitation as religious forgiveness, namely, that it can be refused.

In the New Testament Christ speaks of there being only one sin or blasphemy that is unforgivable: "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mark 3:28). For Hegel, this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is nothing but the "denial" or "refusal" (*Leugnen*) of the Spirit itself—the refusal of the very spirit that brings forgiveness (VPR 3:165/LPR 3:235). The blasphemers of whom Christ speaks thus never have forgiveness because they themselves refuse it entry into their souls and hold fast to whatever they have done. Forgiveness transforms the souls of those who are forgiven only if it is accepted by them. If, however, they close themselves off to the reconciling forgiveness granted to them, they render themselves unreachable and unforgivable.

The same is true in drama: gestures of forgiveness cannot touch tragic characters who are utterly unyielding in pursuit of their aims. Such characters thus condemn themselves to ruin without forgiveness. Forgiveness does not, therefore, have the power to resolve all tragic conflicts.

It provides a way of avoiding a tragic outcome only in a world in which the characters—in spite of their selfishness, cruelty, or jealousy—are willing to be touched by it.⁸⁰

Conclusion

Hegel states that drama is the highest and most complete form of poetry and of art as such.⁸¹ It is not clear, however, that *tragic* drama in particular is the highest form of art. Tragedy, comedy, Greek tragedy with a peaceful conclusion, and the modern drama or *Schauspiel* all have their place at the pinnacle of art. (Hegel maintains that unless the situation clearly demands a catastrophic ending, he personally prefers plays to have a happy one.)⁸²

As I see it, tragedy and the modern *Schauspiel* complement one another especially well in Hegel's theory. Tragedy (in the full, catastrophic sense) demonstrates the limitations not of human being as such, but of *aesthetic, heroic* individuality (both in art and in the world outside art). It shows free individuals pursuing their interests relentlessly (and heroically), doing violence to others in the process, and so calling down upon themselves justified or merely vengeful violence from those they have violated. Tragedy thus shows heroic individuals bringing destruction upon themselves by adhering unyieldingly to themselves—or, in the words of the New Testament, shows that “whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it” (Luke 17:33).

A modern *Schauspiel*, by contrast, reveals that “whoever loses his life will preserve it.” That is to say, it discloses that a new life of reconciliation and harmony can arise if one is willing to *let go* of oneself and one's interests and meet others in a spirit of trust, yielding, and forgiveness. This does not mean that one has to abandon all interest in one's own concerns (unless, of course, they are murderous), but that one pursue them—as Iphigenie does—in trusting openness to others.

A play such as *Iphigenie auf Tauris* thus offers a *quasi-religious* alternative, within dramatic art, to the tragedy that is engendered by *aesthetic, heroic* individuality. This quasi-religious alternative—of yielding, forgiveness, and reconciliation—in turn holds the key to genuine *ethical* life, which is to be found in communities based not on heroism but on mutual recognition.⁸³ In drama, in other words, art points to a truth that lies beyond its own aesthetic ideal—an ideal that tragedy reveals to be magnificent but self-destructive. This does not mean, however, that tragedy can now be left behind. For it is precisely by understanding the *tragic* consequences of not yielding that one comes to appreciate the urgent need for

yielding and forgiveness in human life. Furthermore, it is precisely by recognizing that tragedy is the result of *free* human intransigence, rather than fate, that one learns that human beings are *free* to let go of themselves and find reconciliation with one another.

Hegel's belief in the possibility of reconciliation and harmony in human life is dismissed by some as naive optimism.⁸⁴ In fact, however, it arises from his profound and sober understanding of *tragedy*. Hegel believes in the possibility of reconciliation because he recognizes that tragedy is not absolutely inevitable, but is ultimately the consequence of our own *deliberate* unwillingness to yield—an intransigence which, by definition, the human spirit can give up if it so wills.

Notes

1. Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 48 (chapter 13). See also M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 384–85.

2. In the following discussion I have drawn on four German editions of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics. (1) G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). This contains the text of the posthumous 1842 edition of Hegel's lectures, and is translated in G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). Reference will be made to the Suhrkamp edition and Knox's translation together in the following form: VA 3:519/A 2:1192. (2) G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. H. Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995); hereafter cited as VAB. (3) G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2003); hereafter cited as VPK. (4) G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik* (1826), ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert and B. Collenberg-Plotnikov (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004); hereafter cited as PKA.

I have also drawn on two German editions of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion. (1) G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke, 3 parts in 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983–85). This is translated in G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. P. C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–87). Reference will be made to the Meiner edition and the translation together in the following form: VPR 2a:557/LPR 2:665. (2) G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969); hereafter cited as PRS.

For Hegel's discussion of tragedy in his *Phenomenology*, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 266–89, 443–50. For an account of Hegel's views on tragedy in his early writings,

see M. de Beistegui, "Hegel: or the Tragedy of Thinking," in *Philosophy and Tragedy*, ed. M. de Beistegui and S. Sparks (London: Routledge, 2000), 11–37.

Throughout the following essay, published translations of German texts have occasionally been modified. Where no published translation has been used, translations are in every case my own.

3. On Hegel's understanding of both art and religion, see S. Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy: Freedom, Truth, and History* (1991; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), chapters 9 and 10. The task of rendering visible what it is to be a free individual is, of course, best fulfilled by sculpture, painting, and poetry, rather than architecture and music. For Hegel's account of architecture, which gives expression to freedom and independence through the construction of beautiful buildings, see Hegel, VA 2:266–350/A 2:630–700; and the essay by David Kolb in the present volume. For Hegel's account of the nonvisual art of music, which gives expression to freedom through organized patterns of sound, see VA 3:131–222/A 2:888–958; and the essay by Richard Eldridge in the present volume.

4. Hegel, VA 1:241–43/A 1:183–85. Such a "stateless condition" is to be found in the mythical "heroic age" of the ancient Greeks (though not, it should be noted, in fifth-century Athenian democracy) or in "times of civil wars in which the bonds of law and order are relaxed or broken"—times often favored by Shakespeare; see Hegel, VA 1:251–52/A 1:192–93; and VPK 88. On the restricted possibilities for dramatic and tragic conflict in organized modern states, see Hegel, VA 1:253–57/A 1:193–96.

5. Hegel understands a tragic fate to be one that is self-imposed, rather than inflicted on something from the outside. Consequently, there is a degree of tragedy in the demise of every finite thing, since each thing is consigned to destruction by its *own* finitude even when the specific agent of its destruction lies outside it. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1999), 129: "Finite things . . . are *negatively* self-related." Tragedy in the fullest sense, however, is generated by freely self-determining, heroic human individuality.

6. Hegel, VA 3:544–45/A 2:1213. Hegel also mentions in this context Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Electra*, and Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In his 1823 lectures on aesthetics, Hegel points out that in the final play of the *Oresteian* trilogy, *The Eumenides*, the conflict between the Furies and Apollo is actually a conflict between the family (understood as the bond between parents and children) and the marriage relation between husband and wife. He also claims, however, that "marriage is the beginning of the state"; see Hegel, VPK 167; and Aeschylus, *The Oresteian Trilogy*, trans. P. Vellacott (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959), 154.

7. Hegel, VPR 2a:379/LPR 2:479. See M. Donougho, "The Woman in White: On the Reception of Hegel's *Antigone*," *Owl of Minerva* 21, no. 1 (fall 1989): 79.

8. Hegel, VA 3:526, 545–46/A 2:1198, 1214–15; see also VPK 305.

9. Hegel, VA 3:534/A 2:1205. Modern characters must enjoy a similar freedom, if they are to be regarded as tragic. Since, in Hegel's view, the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the ghost in *Hamlet* merely announce to the principal characters their own secret ambition or suspicion, Macbeth and Hamlet can both be considered free, tragic figures; see Hegel, VA 1:300/A 1:231; VAB 87–88; VPK

101. Kleist's Prince Friedrich von Homburg, by contrast, cannot be regarded as a truly ideal or tragic character, since he is at the mercy of "an alien beyond" (*ein fremdartiges Jenseits*) within himself, namely, his dreams and visions of the Princess Natalie; see Hegel, VA 1:314–15/A 1:243.

10. Hegel, VA 3:539/A 2:1209. See also Hegel, VAB 323; and VPK 303. The members of the chorus in *The Eumenides* obviously constitute an exception to this, since they (as the Furies) are one party to the dispute.

11. Hegel, VA 3:541/A 2:1211. Hegel does not deny that the origin of the tragic chorus lies in ancient celebrations of Dionysus, but he insists that the purpose of the chorus in fifth-century Athenian tragedy is an *ethical* one; see VA 3:542/A 2:1211–12 and VAB 323. Since this is the case, when tragedy sheds its ethical foundation in the modern, post-Reformation world, and tragic characters are driven by personal passion rather than ethical concerns, the need and justification for a tragic chorus falls away; Hegel, VA 3:543/A 2:1212. For the views of Aristotle and Nietzsche on the origin of tragedy, see Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, 36 (chapter 4); and F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 63–67 (*Birth of Tragedy*, section 8).

12. A. C. Bradley puts Hegel's point well: "The right of each is pushed into a wrong, because it ignores the right of the other, and demands that absolute sway which belongs to neither alone, but to the whole of which each is but a part" (A. C. Bradley, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* [London: Macmillan, 1909], 72).

13. See M. W. Roche, *Tragedy and Comedy: A Systematic Study and a Critique of Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 42: "Just because a work is called a tragedy does not mean that it is a tragedy or deserves to be called one."

14. Hegel, VA 3:549/A 2:1217; see also VAB 325. A similar point is made by Helen H. Bacon about Eteocles and Polyneices in Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes*, when she writes that "each brother is subject to the law he invokes against the other" (H. H. Bacon, "The Shield of Eteocles," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy*, ed. E. Segal [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983], 32).

15. Roche, *Tragedy and Comedy*, 71.

16. Hegel, VPR 2a:557/LPR 2:665. See also Hegel, PRS 2:133; VA 3:550/A 2:1218; VAB 325; and VPK 306.

17. See Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, ed. D. Grene and R. Lattimore, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 1:187.

18. A. W. von Schlegel, *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, 3 vols. (1809–11; Heidelberg: Mohr und Winter, 1817), 1:187.

19. A. Lesky, *Greek Tragic Poetry*, trans. M. Dillon (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 141.

20. Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 438. See also 55: "Although the law apparently did not prevent the relatives of traitors from arranging for their burial outside of Attica, burial within Attic territory was strictly forbidden; and the city itself charged itself simply with depositing the corpse unburied outside these limits. To do more would, presumably, subvert civic values by honoring treachery. As the city's representative, then, Creon must take care not to honor Polynices' corpse."

21. See Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:182, 187; and Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 55, 438.

22. Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 438.

23. *Ibid.*, 54–55, 58.

24. Stephen Bungay, *Beauty and Truth: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 167.

25. Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:188. Hegel's perspective might explain why, as Charles Segal observes, "the two words 'decree' [*kerygma*] and 'law' [*nomos*]" are "used confusedly and indiscriminately by Creon"; see C. Segal, *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 140.

26. See Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 63, 67; and Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:210.

27. Lesky, *Greek Tragic Poetry*, 140–41.

28. See Hegel, *VAB* 82–83.

29. There is evidence that Hegel himself may have thought Antigone to be *aesthetically* superior to Creon. He describes her, for example, as "the heavenly Antigone, the most magnificent figure [*die herrlichste Gestalt*] who ever appeared on earth," though he never says anything similar about Creon; see G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 1:509. Hegel does not, however, regard Antigone as *morally* or *ethically* superior to Creon. Ethically, they are "equally justified" (*gleichberechtigt*), but also equally in the wrong; see Hegel, *VA* 3:523, 544, 559/A 2:1196, 1213, 1226; *VPK* 306; and *VPR* 2a:558/*LPR* 2:665.

30. See Donougho, "Woman in White," 78: "Hegel was not *trying* to do justice to the immense richness of the drama." Donougho goes further and asserts that "nowhere in Hegel's works do we find a *reading* of Sophocles' play" at all (or, by implication, of any other tragic drama). According to Donougho, Hegel is interested primarily in the *historical* situations depicted by tragedies, and he simply uses a play such as *Antigone* to analyze a "historical crisis" in Greek civilization (69, 79). To my mind, by contrast, Hegel's theory of tragedy is no more a theory about history than it is a theory about Greek myths. It is a theory about tragedy in *drama*. As such, it must concern itself with—and "read"—particular tragic dramas, at least enough to determine the extent to which they are truly tragic. (Hegel refers to the relation between male and female in *Antigone* in *VPK* 168.)

31. Schlegel, *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, 1:177, 186–87.

32. Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 63, 67.

33. *Ibid.*, 67–68, 75.

34. See Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 55; and Bungay, *Beauty and Truth*, 167.

35. Hegel claims, mistakenly, that Antigone does come to acknowledge her guilt; see Hegel, *VPK* 307; and Donougho, "Woman in White," 85.

36. Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:196; and Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Sophocles II*, ed. H. Lloyd-Jones, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 44–47 (lines 472–76).

37. Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:211; and Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Sophocles II*, 84–85 (lines 872–75).

38. Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:205; and Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Sophocles II*, 68–69 (lines 715–18).

39. Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:215, 218; and Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Sophocles II*, 96–97, 104–5 (lines 1023–29, 1096).

40. Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:223, 225; and Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Sophocles II*, 118–19, 124–25 (lines 1257–60, 1317–25).

41. See D. Bremer, “Hegel und Aischylos,” in *Welt und Wirkung von Hegels Ästhetik*, ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert and O. Pöggeler, *Hegel-Studien* 27 (1986): 227, 239; K. von Fritz, *Antike und Moderne Tragödie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), 93; and M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 320.

42. See Hegel, VA 3:526/A 2:1198; and Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, 39, 49 (chapters 6, 14).

43. Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, 48–51 (chapters 13–14).

44. See Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 384–85.

45. Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, 50 (chapter 14). See also Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 383.

46. Hegel, VA 1:246–47, 278–79/A 1:188, 213–14; and Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:168–69.

47. Hegel, VA 3:551/A 2:1219; VPR 2a:558/LPR 2:666; VPK 307; and Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:119.

48. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:157.

49. A somewhat similar view of *Oedipus Rex* is put forward by E. R. Dodds: “The immediate cause of Oedipus’ ruin is not ‘Fate’ or ‘the gods’—no oracle said that he must discover the truth . . . ; what causes his ruin is his own strength and courage, his loyalty to Thebes, and his loyalty to the truth. In all this we are to see him as a free agent” (E. R. Dodds, “On Misunderstanding the *Oedipus Rex*,” in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy*, ed. E. Segal [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983], 183). See also J. P. Vernant, “Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of *Oedipus Rex*,” in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy*, 191: “Oedipus, and Oedipus alone, leads the ‘play.’ Nothing except his stubborn will to unmask the guilty, . . . his passionate desire to know the truth at any price—nothing obliges him to push the inquiry to its end.” Assuming that these readings of the play are right, Oedipus could have avoided his tragic fate by heeding the initial warnings of Teiresias, accepting that he might in some way himself be responsible for the city’s pollution, and banishing himself from the city without bringing the full truth to light.

It should be clear that I strongly disagree with Stephen Bungay’s claim that “Hegel is interpreting a myth and not a play” and that he does not discuss Oedipus’s discovery of who he is and what he has done (Bungay, *Beauty and Truth*, 172). Here, in my view, is a crucial difference between Hegel and Nietzsche. Hegel sought to understand the tragedy that unfolds in the very plot of Sophocles’ play. Nietzsche, by contrast, interprets the play as subservient to an underlying dark myth which it both reveals and conceals and whose significance, it seems, Sophocles himself never fully grasped. See Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 67–69, 105 (sections 9, 17). For a more extended comparison of Hegel and Nietzsche on the sub-

ject of tragedy, see S. Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chapter 8.

50. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 1:126–28.

51. Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, 39, 48–50 (chapters 6, 13–14).

52. See Hegel, VA 3:524–25/A 2:1197; Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T. A. Sinclair (1951), rev. T. J. Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 473 (8.7); and J. Lear, “Katharsis,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, ed. A. O. Rorty (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 334.

53. On “nemesis” in the story of Oedipus, see Hegel, VPR 2a:558/LPR 2:666; and PRS 2:133. On the difference between “nemesis” and eternal justice (and the connection between the former and “epic” justice), see Hegel, VA 3:364, 548–49/A 2:1071, 1216–17; see also VPR 2a:539/LPR 2:647. Note that the justice Hegel sees at work in a model Greek tragedy, such as *Antigone*, is not *moral* justice, according to which “evil is punished and virtue rewarded,” but *ethical* justice, according to which the conflict between two equally justified, but one-sided, ethical individuals is brought to an end and the harmony of ethical life is restored; see Hegel, VA 3:547/A 2:1215; see also PRS 2:132: “sittliche Gerechtigkeit.” Indeed, Michelle Gellrich suggests that it was Hegel in particular who helped criticism move away from the idea that Greek tragedies are mere “morality dramas,” in which right is clearly differentiated from wrong, and bad men and women simply get their just deserts; see M. Gellrich, *Tragedy and Theory: The Problem of Conflict Since Aristotle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 71–72. For a Neoclassical “moral” interpretation of ancient tragedy, see J. C. Gottsched, *Schriften zur Literatur*, ed. H. Steinmetz (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972), 10.

54. See Hegel, VA 3:494, 525/A 2:1173, 1197. Dennis Schmidt, by contrast, argues that “art is, by nature, a conflicted enterprise”; D. J. Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 119. For Hegel, it is above all Aeschylus and Sophocles (among the Greeks) whose plays leave us with a profound sense that justice has been done. Euripides, by contrast, often leaves us feeling mere pity for the suffering of individuals, rather than satisfaction at the justice of their fate (Hegel, VA 3:546, 562/A 2:1215, 1228). It should be remembered that, for Hegel (in contrast to Aristotle), truly tragic characters are not those who suffer *undeservedly* through their own actions—and so are merely pitiable—but those who are fully responsible for their own downfall (Hegel, VA 3:524–26, 546/A 2:1197–98, 1214–15). Deianeira, in Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis*, will thus be a *tragic* figure, if her suffering is judged to be due primarily to her own “eager haste” in pursuing a course of action she does not properly understand, but a *pitiable* figure, if her suffering is judged to be due principally to the deceit of the centaur, Nessus; see Sophocles, *Women of Trachis*, in *Sophocles II*, 192–93, 216–17.

55. Hegel, VA 3:550/A 2:1218–19; VPK, p. 307, and Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 3:105.

56. Neoptolemus in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* is a notable exception to this; see Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 3:94–104.

57. Hegel, VA 3:536–37/A 2:1206–7. On the difference between Orestes and Hamlet in this regard, see Hegel, VA 3:559/A 2:1225–26. On the difference be-

tween Euripides and Racine in their treatment of the relation between Hippolytus and Phaedra, see Hegel, *PRS* 2:133–34. It should be noted, however, that, for Hegel, subjective passions (such as anger) are already beginning to displace ethical interests as motives for action in some of Euripides' plays: "Euripides already abandons polished plasticity of character and action and goes over to subjective emotion" (Hegel, *VA* 3:562/*A* 2:1228). "Plasticity" of character, in Hegel's view, is the living "sculptural" quality shown by those individuals who identify wholly with their ethical pathos; see Hegel, *VA* 1:310, 3:522, 546/*A* 1:239, 2:1195, 1214–15; and *VPK* 104. On the relation between the plasticity of character in Greek tragic drama and the use of masks, see Hegel, *VA* 3:511–12/*A* 2:1186–87; and *VPK* 299.

58. See Hegel, *VA* 2:200–2, 3:564/*A* 1:577–79, 2:1229; and *VAB* 174.

59. The self-destructive actions of "strutting evil brutes" are thus no more tragic in Hegel's eyes than in Aristotle's; see Hegel, *VA* 2:210/*A* 1:586; and Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, 48 (chapter 13). Hegel's position also implies that people who are neither particularly admirable nor evil, but who destroy themselves through simple foolishness, narrow-minded stubbornness, or anxiously clinging on to themselves, are not truly tragic (though they are more so than those who are the innocent victims of forces beyond their control).

60. Hegel recognizes that Hamlet does not pursue an ambition or suspicion with the unrelenting energy of Macbeth or Othello, but is a more profound, thoughtful, and melancholy character whose "noble soul is not made for this kind of energetic activity." Nevertheless, Hamlet can be regarded as a tragic individual to the extent that he perishes as a result of "his own hesitation" (*das eigene Zaudern*) and the "beautiful uprightness of his heart," rather than circumstances beyond his control. For Hegel's discussion of Hamlet, see *VA* 1:300–1, 316, 2:207–8, 3:559, 566–67/*A* 1:231, 244, 583–84, 2:1225–26, 1231–32.

61. Hegel, *VA* 3:565/*A* 2:1230. What reconciles us to the deaths of inward characters, such as Hamlet or Juliet, is, by contrast, the recognition that their own inner nobility or beauty of character has led to their downfall. Yet the thought that Hamlet is simply too noble and discerning and Juliet too beautifully loving for this world also brings with it a deep sense of sadness. According to Hegel, the sense of reconciliation we feel in such cases is thus at best "a painful reconciliation, an *unhappy bliss* in misfortune"; see Hegel, *VA* 3:566–67/*A* 2:1231–32; and *VPK* 309.

62. It is, of course, Nietzsche who maintains that the very idea of justice belongs to the Apollonian surface of Greek tragic drama and serves to veil the horrors revealed by Dionysian insight; see Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 67–72 (section 9).

63. Where individuals are not responsible in any way for the suffering that befalls them, but are the victims of "external contingencies and relative circumstances" (such as sickness or loss of fortune), we either feel overcome by a desire to help or are "torn apart" by the spectacle of misery and distress before us. Similarly, one suspects, Hegel would feel "torn apart" if heroic, "Apollonian" individuals were portrayed as simply destroyed by what Nietzsche calls the "Dionysian basic ground of the world." In contrast to Nietzsche, Hegel can find no "joy . . . in the annihilation of the individual" (or rather, satisfaction), unless the individual—tragically and justly—brings such annihilation upon himself. See Hegel, *VA* 3:526/*A* 2:1198; and Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 36, 104, 143 (sections 1, 16, 25).

64. Hegel, VA 3:532, 550/A 2:1203–4, 1218–19; and VPK 307. For further remarks by Hegel on *Philoctetes*, see VA 1:294/A 1:226; and VPK 99.

65. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 2:178. The text of Hegel's 1820–21 lectures on aesthetics erroneously attributes *Iphigenia in Tauris* to Sophocles and states that Artemis (rather than Athena) issues the command to Thoas; see Hegel, VAB 85–86.

66. J. W. Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, in *Weimarer Dramen: Erster Teil: Egmont, Iphigenie auf Tauris, Torquato Tasso* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1963), 131 (5.3). See also Hegel, VA 1:297–98/A 1:229–30.

67. Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, 137 (5.6); and Hegel, VA 1:298/A 1:229; and VPK 101.

68. Hegel, VA 3:532/A 2:1203. See also Hegel, VPK 101; and PKA 129. For a reading of Goethe's play in the context of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, see K. Deligiorgi, "Dissatisfied Enlightenment: Certain Difficulties Concerning the Public Use of One's Reason," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 35 (spring/summer 1997):46–50.

69. N. Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*, vol. 1, *The Poetry of Desire (1749–1790)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 451–52.

70. E. Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (1952; London: Bowes and Bowes, 1975), 41, 44–45.

71. R. C. Ockenden, "On Bringing Statues to Life: Reading Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*," *Publications of the English Goethe Society: Papers Read Before the Society 1984–85* (1986): 85.

72. Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, 105, 131 (3.1, 5.3).

73. T. J. Reed, *Goethe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 57–58. Boyle's argument that King Thoas is not inwardly converted by Iphigenie rests on a particular interpretation of the reasons for the king's anger. According to Boyle, "the reason for Thoas' wrath is not that he fears to lose Iphigenia, but that he believes he has caught her out in deception and hypocrisy, and the ideal which once transformed his life now seems to have feet of clay." In his anger, however, Thoas remains no less committed to that ideal and no less a "disciple of truth." There is, therefore, no real work of conversion to be done; see Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*, 451–52.

To my mind, there are reasons for challenging this interpretation of Thoas. Early in the play, Arkas assures Iphigenie that Thoas has become milder since her arrival in Tauris; but he warns her that Thoas still needs to be helped to keep to the ways of "conversation" (*Reden, Gespräch*) by receiving her trust (*Vertrauen*). Otherwise, he could slip back into his old habit of simply "commanding" people to do what he desires. Indeed, it is apparent from Arkas's words that this old "barbarian" habit still lies just beneath the surface of Thoas' character, for despite his "mildness," Thoas has framed the wish to "possess" (*besitzen*) Iphigenie, come what may (Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, 84–86 [1.2]). When Iphigenie later resists Thoas' approaches, he is angered not just by what he sees as her evasiveness or deceitfulness (or by the fact that he may now be left without an heir), but by the simple fact that she says "no" to him. Here again, we see that Thoas' old habits are

very much alive, despite his newly acquired mildness: he had seen a possible bride in Iphigenie from the start and dislikes now having his hopes dashed and being disobeyed. To put it simply, the “new” Thoas, just like the old, dislikes not getting his own way. On being refused by Iphigenie, he relapses more overtly into his old ways and decides to restore the practice of sacrificing to Diana any foreigners who arrive uninvited in Tauris—a decision which puts Iphigenie (as the high priestess of Diana) in the potentially tragic position of having to sacrifice her brother, Orestes (Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, 92–95 [1.3–4]). To my mind, therefore, Iphigenie does not end up facing a king who is still the (albeit disappointed) “disciple of truth,” but has the serious task of turning Thoas from his barbaric ways back toward the path of truth and humanity. She runs the real risk of failing in this endeavor and, through her disarming openness to and trust in Thoas, brings about a genuine conversion of his soul.

74. Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, 131 (5.3); and Hegel, VA 1:298/A 1:229.

75. Roche describes *Iphigenie auf Tauris* as a “drama of reconciliation” which “synthesizes the firm principles of tragedy with the yielding spirit of comedy”; see Roche, *Tragedy and Comedy*, 247, 253. Hegel greatly admires Goethe’s play (see PKA 129), but he also claims that Iphigenie herself does not “in the strictest sense . . . live or move dramatically” (Hegel, VA 3:500/A 2:1178). This is perhaps because Iphigenie—though she resists Thoas’ approach—does not directly provoke conflict through the deliberate and insistent pursuit of her own purpose, and so is not herself principally responsible for the possibility of *tragedy* in the play.

76. See Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 45, 71 (sections 4, 9).

77. Though Hegel does not say as much, in his understanding of tragedy, even Oedipus might have avoided misery had he yielded to Teiresias and left the city; see note 49 above.

78. Roche cites as examples Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* and Voltaire’s *Alzire*; see Roche, *Tragedy and Comedy*, 262, 275.

79. Hegel, VPR 2a:395, 559, 3:56, 259–60, 287/LPR 2:496, 667, 3:121, 337, 371; VAB 326, 329.

80. Such forgiveness, in Hegel’s view, is absent from ancient Greek tragedy. Neither Philoctetes nor Orestes undergoes an “inner conversion” and forgives his adversaries (Hegel, VPR 2a:396/LPR 2:497). The closest we come to such an inner transformation of the soul in Greek drama, Hegel maintains, is in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*. In this play, we are told, Oedipus finally “expunges all his own inner discord and is purified within.” He is then called to death by a god and “his bones become a salvation and safeguard of the state that received him as friend and guest” (Hegel, VA 3:551/A 2:1219; VPK 307–8; VPR 2a:396, 559/LPR 2:497, 667). Yet Oedipus is not radically transformed by any spirit of forgiveness or compromise. He acknowledges no need to be forgiven himself (indeed, in stark contrast to the close of *Oedipus Rex*, he vehemently protests his innocence), and he refuses to forgive or yield to (but rather places a curse upon) his own son, Polyneices, for having driven him into exile from Thebes (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, in *Greek Tragedies*, 3:134–36, 155–56, 171). Oedipus’s death brings the blessing of ethical harmony to the city of Athens, but he undergoes no change of

heart within himself and so effects no reconciliation between himself and his estranged son, of the kind we look for in modern drama; see C. H. Whitman, "Apocalypse: *Oedipus at Colonus*," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy*, 231.

81. Hegel, VA 3:474/A 2:1158; VAB 317–18; VPK 298.

82. Hegel, VA 3:567/A 2:1232. If anything, as Stephen Law notes, "comedy is the absolute telos of artistic expression" for Hegel, since true comedy starts where tragedy and the *Schauspiel* should end, namely with "an absolutely reconciled and cheerful heart." See Hegel, VA 3:552, 572–74/A 2:1220, 1236–37; VAB 306; S. C. Law, "Hegel and the Spirit of Comedy: *Der Geist der stets verneint*," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. W. Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 113; and H. Schneider, "Hegels Theorie der Komik und die Auflösung der schönen Kunst," *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung* 1 (1995): 81–110.

83. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel claims that "reciprocal recognition . . . is absolute spirit" and arises whenever "two 'I's let go their antithetical existence" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 408–9). In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that life without the necessity (though, of course, with the possibility) of tragedy is to be found in modern ethical life in particular: "The ethical idea, *without . . . unfortunate collisions* and the downfall of the individuals caught up in this misfortune, is *actual and present* in the ethical world"; see G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 181 (Hegel's note to paragraph 140).

84. See, for example, J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. H. E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1958), 240.

Art and History: Hegel on the End, the Beginning, and the Future of Art

Martin Donougho

But it is simply astounding that Goethe and Thorvaldsen are still living, and Beethoven has been dead just a few years, yet H[egel] pronounces German art dead as a doornail [*mausetot*]. Quod non! So much the worse for him, if he really feels this; yet if you reflect a little on his reasoning, it appears quite empty.¹

We can readily understand why the young Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy would resent the verdict that art (or at least what he terms “die deutsche Kunst”) was over and done with—he was a living composer after all. Mendelssohn was not alone in his scornful reaction: Hegel’s idea had gained some notoriety even before his lectures on aesthetics were published in the 1830s. True, the subsequent reception history of the *Aesthetics* tended to feature other themes, notably Hegel’s alleged bias toward content or toward classicism, or—in the famous phrase, which nevertheless has no trace in any surviving lecture notes—beauty considered as the “sensuous shining (*Scheinen*) of the Idea.”² In more recent times, however, the “end of art” topos figures once again as central to Hegel’s aesthetic thinking. The topos has become topical, in short, rather than (as it might have seemed in the *Goethezeit* or later, once art had attained the status of a full-blown institution) merely perverse. It suits our late modern (or post-modern) climate, a time of cultural crisis when contemporary art seems either to have run its course or to be of interest to just the few. In the philosophical literature, it was perhaps Heidegger’s essay on “The Origin of the Work of Art” (published in 1952, though written before the war), with

its baleful framing by the question concerning the fate of art, that gave the Hegelian topos a new lease on life.³ Recently the lease has been extended thanks to Arthur Danto's unexpected discovery of a parallel between trends in postwar art—in painting especially—and features that had led Hegel to diagnose a crisis in the art of his time (I shall come back to Danto's suggestions). How the topos itself might properly be understood, and whether it helps us understand Hegel's philosophy of art or his approach to the history of art, are among the questions I shall address here.

My overall assumption is that Hegel's speculative conception of art is highly complex, despite its simplified presentation in the form of lectures for a general undergraduate audience, and despite (it must be said) Hegel's own patchy acquaintance with the individual arts. Some of that complexity stems no doubt from our retrospective distance from Hegel. Imagine several "models floating above each other as in distinct dimensions," Fredric Jameson suggests, so that "for us" the discrete levels never quite mesh and we are left constantly having to make adjustments.⁴ But even if distance lends disenchantment to the view, much of the complexity can fairly be traced also to Hegel's *own* presentation of art's historically reflexive and reflective nature, or rather, his acknowledgment of the fact that it *has* no given nature or essence. His approach to art reflects both on various cultural phenomena in the past and upon a contemporary classification of such "data," one we might call post-Kantian or Romantic (in our sense rather than the sense of "romantic" current in Hegel's day). Seen thus, in a kind of "stereoscopic" vision, art or the work of art may be said to have multiple beginnings and multiple endings: in Egypt, with the production of architectural signs which then reflect on their failure to signify; in ancient Greece, with the production of sculptural signs which at least *seem* (but turn out not to be) a perfect fusion of intellectual meaning and sensuous embodiment; with postclassical art, as cultic image differentiating itself from the divine it is also meant to serve; in what we now call Romantic art, ironically reflecting on its own semiotic and cultural status *as* art. All of these narratives of origin and declension are brought together thanks to the "medium" of philosophical *Vermittlung* (mediation, conveyance, communication). But it should be noted at the outset that the classical "norm," in both form and content, is not to be taken as normative for Hegel: the "Ideal" is not *his* ideal. Hegel was no (neo)classicist, in other words, even though the fusion of shape (*Gestalt*) and meaning (*Bedeutung*) acts as a paradigm of what he terms "art-religion." Philosophical mediation functions also as a distancing *critique* of the classical norm and its "cold pastoral."

Pivotal to my argument is a paradox I have touched on elsewhere.⁵ How is it that Hegel was able to pronounce an end to art at the very mo-

ment when art—Art “proper,” as R. G. Collingwood courteously dubs it—was just emerging? (By a capitalized “Art” I mean both the Romantic aesthetic of expressivism—a self-consciously singular concept-cum-practice, different in kind from the preceding loose colligation of “fine arts”—and an emergent culture of collection and performance, in museums and concert halls built to display masterpieces taken from the past.) In particular, what is it about Romantic reflection that renders art *sovereign* while all the same consigning it to the museum, concert hall, or scholarly library, as something that demands a differentiated “intellectual” or “cultivated” response? And further, how are we to conceptualize the relations between this singular *Art* and two crucial terms, its *philosophy*, and then its *history* (whether as *Geschichte* or as *Historie*, objective *res gestae* or narrative of *rerum gestarum*)?

These are large questions, which I shall approach in three stages. First, I offer a preliminary sorting of different “senses of an ending”—a much-debated issue, hardly resolved here or perhaps even resolvable at all. This is followed by a section on historiography as it applies to art—indeed, to art *before* it was practiced and theorized as “art.” I then turn to art *after* “the end of art,” that is to say, “posthistorical” art considered in the light of Hegel’s formula; I briefly consider two recent interpretations, by Dieter Henrich and by Arthur Danto. The paradoxes inherent to Hegel’s conception of art emerge most clearly in Danto’s (still emerging) take on recent history in visual art as well as on Hegel’s *Aesthetics*. Finally, a short “postscript” touches on Hegel’s view of contemporary tendencies in art, so far as we can tell what that amounted to, in the absence of a critical edition of the Berlin lectures.

Some Versions of Pastness

One canard has often enough (or perhaps not often enough!) been spotted: Hegel refers not to the “death” of art, only to its “end,” or better, its “pastness.” Croce disparages Hegel’s “necrology” of art, and his talk of a “death of art in the historical world.”⁶ Yet Hegel himself allows that art may well *continue*, and hopes it will, while conceding that it can no longer occupy the same religious or high-cultural place as before.⁷ Indeed, it could be argued (following Stephen Houlgate) that in a Hegelian perspective art remains capable of meeting vital—though secular—human needs (sensuous enjoyment, directed to significant human or natural interests); and I shall return to this idea in my “postscript.”⁸ Another error—less a misreading, more an overinterpretation—is to accuse Hegel of privileg-

ing philosophy (and indeed his *own* philosophy) at the expense of art and individual works of art. Often this objection takes polemical form: “Who does he think he is!” Indeed, whole books have been written in the vein of allegations that Hegel—just *typical* of those philosophers!—will sacrifice the given facts (art as empirical phenomenon) for an a priori ordering, usually by threes.⁹ Without going into what might fuel such animus, I suggest that on the contrary Hegel is very much alert to both the need for and the dangers of categorial imposition upon the world. On the one hand, things don’t necessarily “speak for themselves,” while on the other, we have no given right to speak for them. Philosophical mediation avoids both sorts of givens, even though the balancing act is hard to pull off in practice. The next section of my essay will return to the role of reflection in art. Meanwhile, let me offer a preliminary sketch of Hegel’s philosophical assessment of art.

Hegel’s attitude to art and its relation to philosophy underwent several changes through his life. He shifted from an early Grecomanic phase, much indebted to Schiller, when he called for a new “mythology of reason” to leaven a present seen as a time of abstract and “prosaic” divisiveness. Even in the more inflected *Natural Law* essay (1802), history and philosophical reflection both operate under an aesthetic aegis. Aeschylus’s *Eumenides* is made to stand for the reconciliation of natural and man-made law (i.e., of Scottish political economy and classical political theory); the cycle of history is tragic in mode, and so gives the philosophical spectator a certain distanced satisfaction. By the time of the 1805–06 *Realphilosophie*, however, ancient Greece—the polis as artwork—has been firmly put in its place, namely, the *past*, while art itself becomes a merely formal presentation, deceptively oscillating between naive nature and knowing subjectivity: “the Indian Bacchus . . . the veil [*Schleier*] that hides the truth, rather than its representation [*Vorstellung*].”¹⁰ The *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) renders art a shape of religion, as both consciousness and cult, but “manifest” (i.e., Christian) religion surpasses it, while philosophical knowing surpasses religion altogether. By the 1820s, Hegel’s approach comes to distinguish art from religion altogether (at least in principle—for in fact the Greek Ideal fuses religious, political, and aesthetic consciousness), while both art and religion are ultimately viewed in philosophical perspective.

My rather lame pun on William Empson’s *Some Versions of Pastoral* serves at least to bring out what he styles “the pastoral process of putting the complex into the simple.”¹¹ Strictly speaking, it is the *heroic* rather than *pastoral* that constitutes the classical Ideal in Hegel’s reading, a “noble simplicity” rather than the “noble swain.” Nevertheless the term “pastoral” does capture the sense—“sentimental” rather than “naive”—in which a

classical character or demeanor becomes exemplary for later societies, which see in the undifferentiated social and aesthetic existence depicted in the classical model not merely an ideal version of themselves but also their vaunted universal (if innocent) humanity. Although a cultural projection, “pastoral” is not thereby simply false or ideological. For the artist it offers a vehicle for ennobling his or her own efforts. And if a corrupted “age of reflection” is thus measured against a projected past simplicity, Hegel in turn reflects on the implications of this act of projection.

There follows from the foregoing considerations a primary sense to saying that art is at an end or lies in the past—beyond the trivial sense in which it lay in *Hegel’s* past. The various senses of the pastness of art are discussed below.

1. We no longer take the artwork to disclose the ultimate ground and measure of our being, we no longer “bend the knee” or think within its orbit. Hegel’s thesis goes together with “a disavowal of what was once his finest hope—the return of a political system and a form of social life which requires and deserves aesthetic predicates,” writes Dieter Henrich.¹² More beautiful (than the Greek “religion of beauty”) one cannot be or become (VA 2:128/A 1:517)—but nostalgia is not permitted philosophy, we read in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*. “Art outlives itself,” he declares in 1828—our deeper interests migrate into religion and philosophy.¹³

2. A further implication would be that philosophy—or thought, at least—has replaced an aesthetic way of viewing the world, so that even our attitude to art is intellectual and critical rather than a living relation to the work such that we ourselves become its authors as much as the artist proper. Looking back, the works of the muses (to recall the often-cited lines from the *Phenomenology*)

are now what they are for us—beautiful fruit picked from the tree. A friendly fate presents them to us, as a maiden might offer that fruit. It does not give the actual life of their existence—the tree that bore them. . . . [F]ate does not give us their world along with the works of that art . . . only the veiled recollection [*Erinnerung*] of this actuality.¹⁴

Our work is merely “external” and consists of a scholarly dusting off of the fruit, readying it for storage in our cultural cupboards—museums, concert halls, and the like—or else for a philosophical recuperation in our treatises and lectures. It is at this “external” stage that the scholar (*der Kenner*) has a necessary role, though more than expertise is needed if we are to recollect and cognize it *as art*. In replacing living image with intellectual concept, Hegel follows in the steps of Plotinus and Origen.¹⁵ Yet equal weight should be accorded to Hegel’s declaration that art *remains* (*bleibt*)

something past, in being framed, shelved, and housed *as* such. Exactly how to understand this museal or cultural existence (as sepulchre, as civic or national celebration, as pragmatic guide in life, and so on) needs further discussion . . .

3. A corollary to this reflective turn will give us a further sense of art's lying in the past. Art now invites an "intellectual consideration" (*denkende Betrachtung*), a distanced and critical attitude, the obverse to which is the lifeless abstraction of modern culture and "the prose of the world." Hence the verdict becomes that the "universal conditions" of our time are unfavorable to the production of or engagement with artworks (VA 1:25–26/A 1:10–11). We are no longer "at home" in our modern-day lifeworld; the things we use and work with are alien, and so on—in marked contrast to the "heroic age" depicted (or projected, rather) in Homeric epic. Trying to fashion sensuous art from such abstract material is like making bricks without straw. One might also reverse perspective and remark (3a) that this experience operates as an implicit critique of the age, of society, and of the abstract state,¹⁶ or even hold (3b) that the artwork harbors—in Adornian manner—a promise that things might be better or ought to conform to art's sensuous focus on "minute particulars." Or again, one might (3c) bid "farewell to an idea"—the idea of socialism and modernism—as T. J. Clark does in hoping against hope that something might come of the artist's habitual diagnosis of a progressive "disenchantment of the world."¹⁷ And there are other variants of this sort, which I shall look at next.

4. A fourth sense of the pastness of art derives from Hegel's theory of the "art form" and its corresponding "worldview." Hegel defines art as the linkage of shape (*Gestalt*) and meaning (*Bedeutung*), on the one hand, and on the other as the *presenting* (*Darstellen*) of that meaning in a sensuous or imaginative way. Historicizing this linkage gives us three possibilities: preart (*Vorkunst*), or "symbolics," a name Hegel borrows from his friend Friedrich Creuzer's term *Symbolik*; art proper, or the classical Ideal of the ancient Greeks; and postart, of the Christian or "romantic" age. The determination or destiny of art is both to embody and to present a meaning, one that—and this is the properly expressivist moment—has no existence independent of its expression. There may be problems with such a formulation, but what is important for Hegel is that art is to bring out what would otherwise remain hidden and even unformed. We might dub this the "hermeneutic" function of art: it enunciates and transmits a truth the community might not have grasped without its help.¹⁸ Indeed, this idea goes back to some of Hegel's earliest thoughts about art as cultural memory, "the Mnemosyne of the ancients," that which recalls us to ourselves.¹⁹ Far from instrumentalizing art—*ars magister vita*—this would on the contrary aestheticize our normative existence, our social space of reasons.

Yet the dialectical potential in Hegel's presentation of the Ideal ensures that the Greek apotheosis of absolute self-transparency, self-signification, always leaves something over for further interpretation. . . . Paradoxically, then, we may speak of a definite "content" corresponding to the form of art only so far as that is *not* fully explicit: a further interpretation will reveal the content that lay hidden. Thus, symbolic art will reveal the truth (content, *Inhalt*) implicit in nature, as classical art reveals the tacit content of symbolics (humanity, intentionality), or romantic art reveals the true content of classical form (the bifurcation of human and divine existence, subjectivity, and the world). The truth of Greek sculpture or tragedy is less the classical Ideal, then, and more (i) the subjectivity that could not be shown directly, and (ii) the materiality or contingent "externality" that could not be utilized as a medium. But the dialectic presses further. Art begins with symbolism—the pretense that signs are natural when in fact they are intentional—and proceeds to a fusion of nature and culture, sensuous shape (the human body) and intellectual meaning (the Ideal)—signified in sculpture and epic deed—and then on to the aesthetic *distinguishing* of spirit from nature, and finally to a reflection upon this whole semiotic process. In this last, belated and disenchanted perspective the classical Ideal may be portrayed as an instance of *economimesis* (Derrida's term, whereby art is taken as imitating nature, which imitates art, and so on): we moderns can see through the mask of its vaunted naturalism, its unvoiced assumption that the sensuous sign is immediately transparent to intellectual meaning.²⁰

It follows that to disparage Hegel's system as an "aesthetics of content" is to ignore this whole dynamic (and indeed, the complex logic of "form" and "content"). Equally, to characterize it as a "(neo)classical" aesthetic (but then, every "classicism" is a "neoclassicism") would be to take Hegel's philosophical presentation of the Ideal at face value, as if—to repeat the point—he *himself* believed in it or in its possible *ricorso* in modern dress. When, however, we take form and content more as tools of analysis than as fixed stars, we can better understand why Hegel understands art as at an end. It is not just because religion and philosophy supplant it as the object of our serious interest, but also because *there is today no longer a hidden content for sensuous or imaginative form to present and express*. Art is no longer a living option. Its future is "all used up." In particular, art is decoupled from any *religious* content or function (save perhaps in a parodic mode).²¹ Hegel strongly criticizes, on philosophical grounds, the quest by the Nazarenes to recover Christian thematics for painting; nothing could be more false to the hermeneutic function of art, he thinks.

Hans Belting grasps that clearly in his essay *The End of the History of Art?*—the title of which is deliberately ambiguous, the question it poses

rhetorically hard to fix. For his concern is on the one hand with the end simply of a Vasari-type narrative modeled on *organic* process, by which art achieves a normative perfection of style—Raphael, say—against which everything else is to be measured. On the other hand, he points to Hegel’s methodological breakthrough, first, to a *historical* (rather than *natural*) model of artistic development, and second, to the decoupling of aesthetic norms from history: “Art . . . has assumed a historical function,” he writes, where for Winckelmann “art history was still a sort of applied art criticism.”²² After Hegel, art history writing parts company with art criticism (perhaps the same could be said for other arts). We may speak “theoretically”—that is, historically—of art and artworks, but our pronouncements carry no implications for artistic practice in the future. Philosophy and art history will now “leave everything as it is.” Art is past, then, because *there is no destiny for it to fulfill*, no essential “work” left for it to do. Exceptions such as Ruskin or, more recently, Aldo Rossi and Manfredo Tafuri, serve to test and confirm the rule. Their wish to integrate a historicist sensibility into contemporary architecture—its style “will remember the history of the past, make history in the present, and teach history in the future”—is not typical of theorists or historians.²³ It may instead have something to do with the public nature of architecture, or with its civic beholdenness, however attenuated this might now have become. Tafuri writes: “The very concept of *art* begins to decline with the decline of history: when Hegel, between 1817 and 1826, decrees the *death of art*, rather than a prophecy he makes a lucid diagnosis.”²⁴ Disregarding the supposed death sentence, we may nevertheless take his point, that modern art (which for Tafuri began with the Tuscan humanists!) depends on systematic amnesia. The twentieth-century avant-garde is just the latest manifestation of the “eclipse of history,” one that Tafuri and Rossi look to reverse: architecture should build memory into its current practice. This polemic tendency—call it (4a)—seeks by current practice to reverse the verdict that art is exhausted and has no more work to do. A different version of this would be Hans Belting’s attempted rapprochement between art historical writing and contemporary criticism, or at least contemporary art history—call this (4b). It is perhaps of a piece with his awareness of the role of religious imagery in medieval art—art before “art,” as it were (and was)—and signals his desire to make theory alive once more, engaged with the art scene itself.²⁵

An amusing, though desperately serious, variant—(4c)—may be found in Hubert Damisch’s “Robinsonades II: The Real Robinson,” which champions Dubuffet’s *art brut* over the art of the dialectician Duchamp, who remained convinced that art has nothing important left to do.²⁶ Quoting Hegel (as translated by Victor Jankélévitch from Lasson), Damisch

resists having to see things through the “screen” of “culture, *our* culture,” which he takes to be nothing but a figment of the philosopher’s reason.²⁷

And what if art (as Thomas De Quincey nicely put it) couldn’t be reduced to the catalogue numbered by the Muses? Or . . . if art didn’t like to sleep—as Dubuffet has it—in the beds made up for it, or to live in the habitations built for it, or to be organized in the enclosures assigned to it? . . . [A]rt no longer recognizes itself in the mirror culture now holds up to it, and it bears the trappings its priests and doctors weigh it down with, the official cult whose object it is, with growing impatience. . . .²⁸

—and so on. The thing that differentiates this reaction from (3b), say, is an admission that the abstract culture (*Bildung*) being resisted is one *demand*ed by Hegelian dialectic. (To be more exact, Adorno—and following him, Gregg Horowitz²⁹—would admit that dialectic entails a reified culture, which, however, they take to be resisted precisely *by* dialectic rather than through its blank refusal.) Damisch accepts that such culture—*our* culture, he quotes Hegel as claiming—exists in institutional fact, one he sees as a threat. While he compares Hegel with Crusoe in their shared reliance on their own “culture,” it is clear that Damisch and Dubuffet are no less shipwrecked, reduced to casting messages in bottles: the essay styles itself a “Robinsonade.”³⁰

5. Close to this fourth line—exhaustion of the *work* of interpretation and its dialectical exigency—is Hegel’s diagnosis of the predicament of art practices in his own time: a nuanced reaction at once disenchanted, critical, fascinated, and exploratory (so far as we can judge in the absence of a critical edition of the various lecture series). Hegel presents romantic art as comprising three stages: first, a religious sphere (Griesheim’s 1826 notes label it “inwardness of spirit”); second, displacement into secular themes (honor, courtly love, fidelity); and finally, the “dissolution” (*Zerfallen*) of the romantic, art’s transcending of itself in its own terms. In this fifth variant of the thesis, with the dissolution of romantic art, *we find art as a whole at an end-stage, all played out*.³¹ It collapses into the extremes of inner and external: “subjective humour” and the inspiration (*Einfälle*)³² of genius, on the one hand; realism in literature and painting on the other, along with an emphasis on artistic skill in producing such illusions (“*He can paint*”—VA 2:226/A 1:598). “The artwork is therefore as much a work of free and arbitrary choice [*ein Werk der freien Willkür*] and the artist master over God,” Hegel writes in 1827.³³ This verdict parallels Hegel’s critique both of Romantic irony and of Friedrich Schlegel’s theory and poetry (the flattest prose, Hegel declares). How exactly to assess the verdict is a matter

of controversy (see my “postscript” below). Did Hegel grow more pessimistic about new directions for art, or more conservative in his interpretation of its significance (a museal culture, mere *Biedermeierkunst*)? Or do his remarks perhaps indicate a modest faith in the possibilities of true “objective humour”—associated with Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan* or with Rückert’s lyric poems? What are we to make of his allusions to art’s making *Humanus* its new saint, finding its ground in universal human feeling (*Gemüth*) as though the poet were a dramaturg, putting figures from world literature on the stage of his or her imagination?³⁴ Or finally, does his suggestion that the “epigraph” is a transitional figure of speech appearing between art forms/worldviews open up avenues for “post-romantic” (and indeed, post-Romantic) art? Would “objective humour” then mark the passage to a higher stage, whatever that might prove to be? (Such deep and intricate issues touch on what I shall treat later under the rubric of “art after the end of art.”)

6. A very different angle, one little remarked on, is what might be called *the essential pastness* of art (a consideration of which will carry over into the next section). Art is *necessarily* past, “always already” past, because it subsists only in retrospect, just as essence (*Wesen*) comprises what has been (*gewesen*).³⁵ This thought emerges most clearly in the *Phenomenology*, though it is also present in the *Aesthetics*, where Hegel suggests that the Greek epic poet or dramatist takes his thematic material from the past—when a shape of life has grown old, and its essential traits can be seen for what they truly are.³⁶ The *Phenomenology* takes the theme much further (and here I summarize). The section on *Kunstreligion* has an overview depicting the artist-self as reflecting on his ethical substance, yet in mourning for the loss of his world. Hegel figures this in two ways. First, it is expressed as a tragic agon between the motivating *pathe* of self and substance, resolved, however, in victory by the artist as he manages to forge the *work* (which thus embodies a performative contradiction—a tragic product which resolves tragic division into subjective unity). And second, it appears as Christ’s betrayal in Gethsemane (in the night of subjectivity). Hegel here complicates the simple picture according to which poetic language imitates social reality. It is presented as *itself* action and work, reflecting in turn on shapes of action and work (though also shaping them). This constitutes an unstable dynamic, one that proceeds to its own undoing in classical tragedy, where the artist-self reveals that the god has deceived us (in our roles as citizens/chorus/audience), and that representation as such is seen through.

The argument (much foreshortened above) is, I would maintain, crucial to Hegel’s general position, and I’d like to make it another way. The classical Ideal is defined as plastic or sculptural—that is, meaning

shines through comportment—or as a unified action, as deed (action as a completed work, through which a univocal purpose shines). It is characterized as a mysterious “self-signifying” (*Sich-selbst-Bedeuten*). I can’t go into this, but will say only that it sounds much like the Romantic symbol (not allegory but tautology, said Schelling, echoing Coleridge); and one wonders how to unpack the mystical unity of its “pantification” (Empson). As Hegel presents the Ideal, however, the structure of action is temporal as well as synoptic, and the work (re)presenting the divine unity also uncovers distinctions that cannot be thematized in aesthetic terms.³⁷ Thematically, tragedy undermines the norms it was to exhibit; taken formally or performatively, the unity is evident only *ab extra*, in reflection. The logic of reflection comprises two senses of immediacy or the given, that of being (the Form or the Law just *is*), and that of reflection itself (subjective positing, the sheer activity of *forming*). The classical Ideal, as expressed in the artwork, plays with both moments, as Hegel’s philosophical presentation implicitly shows. The paradox here is that *that* becomes evident only in distant retrospect: the truth is immanent in the Ideal, yet requires external reflection to bring out that immanence.³⁸ As the sociologist Niklas Luhmann paradoxically phrases it, “We can know reality only because we are excluded from it—as from paradise.”³⁹

To recap these various possible meanings of the “end of art” in Hegel:

1. Art no longer discloses or embodies an ultimate truth or value (as with the ancient Greeks).
2. Reflection replaces intuition and representation in our way of life, including our attitudes to art.
3. The times are unfavorable to the production of new art (and so much the worse for us).
4. The cultural dialectic between form and content is all used up; there is nothing more to disclose; theoretical historicism is incompatible with current practice, though we can try to escape.
5. Contemporary art is playing out an endgame of sorts: as museal art, or as Biedermeier style, as “objective humour,” as a humanistic *Weltliteratur* or world-art, or perhaps in the form of epigraph (fragmentary *Einfall* or inspiration), and so on.
6. Art is “essentially” past: to gain a vantage point on a form of life is already to embalm it or lament its passing; or—resorting to paradox—the very unity of the Ideal supposes its dividedness.

I would argue that this last paradox is at the heart of Hegel’s *Aesthetics*. Let me take it further in the following section, where I raise the question of how the speculative historian (Hegel) can refer to a practice that has not yet been distinguished as such or at least has been categorized differently.

A Local Habitation and a Name

The phrase “art history” yokes together two concepts which acquired their current meanings only in the nineteenth century.

—Hans Belting⁴⁰

This section looks at Hegelian historiography of art and the arts, and attempts to get a purchase on some methodological issues in the *Aesthetics*. Hegelian historiography is unsettled territory. The usual notion is that a “Hegelian” narrative will tell of the gradual advance of human spirit, a story of unfolding freedom and subjectivity as the expression of successive worldviews. Many have taken strong exception to its supposed banishment of “primitive” and non-Western cultures from the pale, its Whiggish “historicism,” its transcendental message or its teleological determinism, and so on. But even if we agree with Ernst Gombrich that Hegel should be portrayed as “the father of art history,” it is not by virtue of anything he himself wrote or said about art or the arts.⁴¹ Indeed, it is more helpful to turn from *Geschichte*, the substance of history, to *Historie* and the *activity* of the historian, about which Hegel has much to say. In the *Aesthetics* history is considered alongside rhetoric as a species of poetic practice. In Hegel’s introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, the history of art qualifies as “specialized” history, one of the varieties of “reflective” history, which views the whole from a particular perspective.⁴² Such a specialized history of art or of the arts is hardly what Hegel himself practices in the *Aesthetics*, however. In fact, it is not clear that the *Aesthetics* aims at a historical narrative at all—either a history or a narrative—with respect to art or the individual arts. It is even less clear that it renders judgment on particular works or genres: their value for philosophy consists rather in instantiating general terms and distinctions. Nor finally is it concerned with normative questions of aesthetic taste, the chief concern of Kantian aesthetics; when Hegel discusses the “externality” of the Ideal—that is, whether artworks survive for later generations—he is making a hermeneutic point about the “reception” of works with peculiar stylistic or thematic features, far removed from standards of taste or the test of time.⁴³

One might put the *Aesthetics* closer to the third mode of approach to history that Hegel lists (following the empirical and reflective), namely, the speculative or philosophical. But this faces a problem. Hegel’s primary assumption is that history relates what is already officially *on record* in the written law or history of the community, so that it reflects on the reflection on what already exists. In that sense he contends India has a poetry but no history; history is oriented largely toward the state. The point is reinforced by the fact that Hegel views art as a form of “absolute

spirit," to be considered beyond history altogether. The 1830 *Encyclopaedia* treats the state and history as the two ultimate forms of objective spirit. Art, religion, and philosophy are, so to speak, *in* history or *in* the state but not *of* it. So far as they have a mediating role, it is trans-historical. How does that consort with Hegel's remark in the *Philosophy of History* that art and religion express an overall sense of what a culture is, perhaps by enunciating its basic *Weltanschauung*?⁴⁴ One answer is that they offer a privileged access to culture, an expression rather than a mere symptom of its general significance. To reverse Hegel's formulation, a state could have a history but no poetry (or other artistic self-reflection upon which the philosopher can reflect in turn). Here we may recall the fourth sense of pastness discussed earlier, linked to the hermeneutic or mnemonic function of art, and note as well a certain tension between the general relation of signifying "shape"/spiritual "meaning" on the one hand, and the specific configurations the relation takes developmentally on the other. If the artwork discerns a meaning in nature—thereby escaping natural determination—that meaning will in turn be interpreted and configured differently, and so on. Arguing in this vein, we may say that, for Hegel, while art may have an essential function—namely, to embody the "deep" meaning of a culture—it has no substantive essence, telos, or inner nature which it "has" to express. Hence the philosopher is not called upon to determine once and for all the unique essence of art or the artwork—what it just *is*. Rather, Hegel presents art dialectically, as a phenomenon (a) which emerges in stages, and (b) whose identity is discerned only in retrospect: its essence is what has been, to employ his wordplay once more. This non-teleological, partly constructivist understanding of art would hold that art comprises what is *treated as* art. That may be no more than tacit: subsequent reflection will articulate what was not explicit in the original practice (Luhmann has proposed a general model for how such semantic-cum-pragmatic distinctions are drawn).⁴⁵

I suggest that such an approach to art matches what Hegel does in the *Aesthetics*. In his philosophical perspective, art begins when we can identify an implicit specification of some perceptible item as embodying a meaning; at the same time, such a discerning inevitably reflects a contemporary conception of art (i.e., as Romantic and institutionalized Art). Moreover, the procedure is closely linked to what I dubbed the "essential pastness" of art, not merely by virtue of the fact that the artist works with materials from the past, but also because what *counts* as art is a discerning of what "has been." Just how far we can take this radical, nonessentialist historicizing is moot, but I want to bring out Hegel's procedure in another way, through comparison with the strictly nominalist approach of Paul Veyne, the French historian of ancient Rome.

A few years ago Veyne published an intriguing study entitled *Writing History*, which professed a nominalism so austere as to hold that history not only has no method, but also fails to explain anything—worse, it doesn't even exist as such.⁴⁶ Perhaps the historian will not go so far as to *invent* history, yet she (Clio being feminine) will at least *inventory* it: bundle, classify, sort, and proffer accounts of human actions. If Veyne has a methodological hero it is Max Weber, to whom he appeals for (among other things) a distinction between “pure” and “axiological” history-writing. The history of art (in general, not merely the visual arts) belongs to the latter, since it is predicated on value judgments—discrimination of masterpieces and great writers, painters, and so on.⁴⁷ Veyne underlines the paradox that once the aesthetic cut is made and a certain canon or discrimination of works established, then the historian can proceed without having to exercise any judgment: literary historians, for example, might have poor taste yet still render a fine account, perhaps all the better for its focus on narrative rather than assessment. “Pure” history, by contrast, would assume no prior value judgments at all, though it may contain them “in quotation,” so to speak, as when one writes about who wrote literary works, in what genres, for whom—given that such works did in fact enter into the rituals and customs of past social life. Pure history attempts to say what has been and what was done; and I take it that Veyne proposes it as a kind of “zero degree” of writing history, which might well never exist in an uninflected state, though its model would be the kind of total history championed by the Annales school. The important difference is that axiological history treats things not in relation to their own time but in relation to the historian's—they are of value to contemporary taste. As distinctions go, this is a useful one, apt to go unnoticed. Veyne instances Alexandre Koyré (we might substitute the name of T. S. Kuhn) as someone who shifted the mode of history of science from axiological to pure. In recent years disciplines such as art history, or the history of music and literature, have similarly moved from “internalist” to “externalist” mode, concerned with institutions, audiences, rituals, and other social practices.

Veyne's writing is provocative stuff, to be handled with care. Its value for present purposes lies in its extreme rejection of any metaphysical “essentialism.” It clears the ground, and hence might throw Hegel's views into relief. The differences are clear enough. Hegel can hardly be said to have attempted a “pure” or “externalist” history; yet neither is his approach “axiological,” in the sense of presupposing aesthetic judgments upon the past. Indeed, Veyne's exclusive focus on aesthetic judgments of taste obscures the historical fact that it reflects a post-Kantian perspective, one which, as we've seen, Hegel for one did not share. Categorical distinctions of what is important for us can be of many sorts. Moreover (a related

point), what is lost from view in Veyne's distinction of "pure" and "axiological" history is the making of an initial value judgment or distinction by which art or the artwork is accorded a high status (as Literature, or as Culture). Veyne is content *that* such distinctions (of whatever sort) are made by somebody (no matter whom); the nominalist takes things as they come, and even narrative is analyzed into a more primitive sort of telling or "giving an account," involving no essential structure. But surely the very *drawing* of distinctions such as "literary work" or "musical performance" is a normative rather than just a descriptive matter, and so related to the normative "cut" the historian makes. Like Foucault, Veyne is perhaps too quick to declare history the play of sheerly contingent or "rare" events, a basic feature of the sublunary world of human affairs about which nothing more may usefully be said. Conversely, "axiological" discrimination is itself something contingent: for example, to speak of "axiology" and "values" is already to adopt a post-Enlightenment perspective upon the past, one in which "value" is thematized and made problematic. Similarly, to apply notions such as "artwork" or "the literary" is to amalgamate—not necessarily without justification, I should add—present and past interests or perspectives. Externalist history would have to comprehend the history of normative judgments, while in turn present-day concerns (an "internalist" conception of art) will bear upon the description of such distinctions (which are of various sorts besides the "aesthetic judgments" of a post-Kantian tradition).

That is also the main lesson to be drawn from Reinhart Koselleck's essays as collected in his *Futures Past*. He shows convincingly that only in the late eighteenth century did there emerge a singular notion of "History," that is, of a total process which absorbs its thematization as well; History (*Geschichte*) is experience which involves knowledge of that experience.⁴⁸ It follows that the historical observer is both apart from and part of the historical process, occupying an unstable, ironic, and (in short) Romantic position. We can go further and observe that art and the aesthetic bear on this emergent dynamic in crucial ways. For whether you tell a narrative of declension, whose endpoint is your own ironic or sentimental perspective, or whether you celebrate the spectacle of historical periods arranged (as Herder put it) like picture galleries, history—taken as a fusion of process and account—tends toward the aesthetic. Moreover, the concept and practice of Art itself—as singular and essentially Romantic aesthetic—emerges around this time too, partly (to simplify mightily) in compensation for the relativizing of *all* values or traditions, when Art could emerge as alone sovereign, in what amounts to a transvaluation of values. Art is less in history than the condition toward which all history tends. Hegel inherits all of this.

To summarize: I argue that a central feature of Hegel's procedure is attention to the retrospective drawing of distinctions, the implications of which may in turn be discernible only in retrospect. The specific distinctions Hegel is concerned with touch upon art, understood minimally as the sensuous *Gestaltung* signifying a meaning (*Bedeutung*) which tends to be "spiritual" or human as opposed to natural—geometrical, animal, and so on. (The process is actually more complicated, since it would include conventional sign-systems, such as writing, which nevertheless involve imagination and figurative language.) The Romantic conception of a singular Art is a late interpretation of previous configurations retrospectively seen as art. Hegel's *Aesthetics* traces a gradual increase in artistic self-reflexivity, culminating in (what we call) Romanticism, to which it is heir. Not only does Hegel define/interpret art in accordance with its later configurations, he also encounters and refines a new cultural distinction termed "Art." The latter is undeniably related to previous distinctions such as "the fine arts," *techné*, and so on, but only by redefining and reinterpreting them: there simply is no supra-historical term "art" instantiated in various cultural formulations. Classical art may be considered Art in "our" sense—yet paradoxically we would have to admit that it was not always so. The challenge for Hegel, therefore, is to provide an account of Greek practices by which they may be seen as normatively a paradigm of art—considered as living religious-political unity, as the aesthetic "Ideal" in his sense of that term—even though such a unity could be conceptualized only in retrospect. Moreover, such an account will also show how the Ideal is itself a reflective interpretation of previous forms of (what has come to be known as) art.

Are there limits to permissible reinterpretation? Informally I suggest the following. (1) What must be discernible in the previous stage is some inkling of reflexivity or self-awareness; if not of the term itself, then at least a practice reflecting in part on its own status or likely reception. That is not necessarily a matter of formal features which the later observer can perceive as salient: those features (2) need somehow to be construed as embodying a *representation* or *attitude* on the part of the agent, maker, or institutional reception. Nor need it entail an express intention ("I am making what will come to be called 'Art as such'"), only (3) some hint of intentionality which the observer can reconstruct in reflexive terms. Here I am thinking of Hegel's notion of "symbolic art," which the *Aesthetics* introduces as exceeding the merely given, the natural, the found—even granted that its constituent ambiguity may leave us in two minds as to whether there is symbolic intentionality to start with!⁴⁹ Architecture becomes art (as opposed to mere shelter) when it signifies (i.e., may be taken as signifying) a distinct meaning, even if that remains equivocal; Hegel

suggests that such equivocation is a defining feature of the symbolic mode. Now (4) there does seem a certain asymmetry to the process. Once the conception is in place, it is evident that subsequent practices can allude to it, and in that sense remain within its ambit—a significant point here, for increasingly artistic practice has embodied reflective consideration as to what would *count* as art, formally or institutionally. It is less clear that a previous conception could be used to reinterpret a current one. Although Collingwood does speak of such reverse anachronism or “panchronism” (“obsolete” meanings, he calls them), recasting art as imaginative expression into the terms of ancient “craft” is for him more like a mixture and a misunderstanding.⁵⁰ It is as if we revert to a past conception, yet only under present circumstances: we cannot recover a lost innocence. The dialectical process seems unidirectional. On the other hand (5) continuity could in fact be broken, as meanings fade away or are imperceptibly absorbed and redistributed. We can envisage subsequent practices so altering or inflecting an existing distinction that a wholesale semantic and pragmatic shift takes place, whether consciously or just in retrospect (later the break seems obvious).⁵¹ Indeed, something like that might already have happened behind our backs. “Media events” might have already supplanted the “artwork” as a way or even the best way to slice current reality, only we aren’t yet clear on how or why. One indication would be that we depend on the “scholar” (*Kenner*) to give us external access to the Art and Artwork, though much is lost in translation. Perhaps “we” are not there yet.

Hegel’s dialectical approach proceeds by positing tacit presuppositions which are then seen as being made explicit in subsequent artistic practice. Something should be said, in conclusion, concerning the normative and seemingly supra-historical status of the classical art form. I have presented Hegel as reading a contemporary (what we now call) Romantic conception of Art backward into history. That is at odds with the prevailing view that Hegel pays allegiance to the (neo)classicist Ideal: the Ideal is *his* ideal. I would argue that Hegel in fact thinks little of the ancient Greeks’ “cold pastoral.”⁵² He displays more interest in the “symbolic” and “romantic” cultural forms. Indeed, the classical Ideal is difficult to articulate, in its tautegorical economimesis; it exists seemingly as a vanishing point, something that can only be surmised as located between a before and an after. Moreover, there is the paradox cited by Lukács whereby an epic wholeness can be discerned only in dissolution, or else via the distinctions present in drama. In the same vein, one might point out that for a supposed enthusiast Hegel is oddly critical of the classical Ideal. Its sculptural/epic unity is shown to split into opposing norms, as the tragic genre undoes the absoluteness of aesthetic semblance from within; the

purity of the ethical deed falls asunder into temporal action whose meaning can be disparately interpreted. Lastly, Hegel recalibrates the classical unities in terms of Romantic creativity; subjectivity stages the show. In philosophical retrospect, “we” can see behind the mask the persona that the *Phenomenology* declares to be “essential” to classical tragedy. We return then to the “essential pastness” of art, and so to the further question, raised by the fourth sense of pastness, whether there remains any margin for a play of aesthetic semblance, once the players have been unmasked, or whether all representation will immediately be seen through as without essence. We also anticipate the next section of this essay, which poses the question of whether and how post-Romantic art might still find room to breathe, whether in short there is life after Romantic irony.

Art After the End of Art? Back to the Future

The history of art is the history of revivals.⁵³

Stephen Bungay neatly sorts reactions to the “end of art” hypothesis into three. There are those who understand it to be a “funeral oration,” those who think it mistaken if perhaps corrigible, and those—a large group which grows by the year—supposing that Hegel’s remarks in fact provide some insight into the “future” of art after 1830.⁵⁴ Perhaps the best known among the latter group are Dieter Henrich and, more recently, Arthur Danto. In this section I shall briefly canvas their suggestions, without claiming that these exhaust all formal possibilities for charting Hegel’s foresight.

First, then, Dieter Henrich. In 1964 he published a challenging and complex article on the topic. Thirty-five years later he revised and enlarged his views in a series of lectures on “art and life.”⁵⁵ In the original article he maintains the following:

1. Art as Hegel conceives it works to *present* the truth in graphic (*anschaulich*) form, but in modern times has become “partial”—that is, it presupposes a religious or philosophical truth which admits only of “partial” illustration by art.⁵⁶

2. Hegel did, however, come to allow a limited role for art—perhaps in a small-scale, private, “Biedermeier” mode, or as a stylistic historicism.

3. This somewhat favorable view becomes more marked in the final lecture series of 1828–29 as compared with previous series, when the thesis of an end to art had sounded much harsher (a change of tone obscured by Hotho’s prejudicial editing).⁵⁷

4. Nevertheless, the thesis of art's being at an end, while entailed by Hegel's aesthetic system, is strictly incompatible with upholding even a limited future for art.

Henrich claims that art cannot both *make present* the truth (that is, truth-as-art) and operate merely "*in consequence*" of a religious or philosophical truth, nowadays as a kind of "play" oscillating between experiment and decorativeness. It follows that if we wish to think of modern or modernist art as harboring its *own* kind of insight, we should abandon the Hegelian conceptualization of art, which Henrich takes to hinge on the Greek achievement of a total harmonization of aesthetic form and content. In other words, he focuses on the first three senses of art-as-past, with some attention also to the fifth (practices in Hegel's own time): art has been left behind by a truth defined first in religious and then in philosophical terms.

My own reading in the previous sections has argued otherwise: that Hegel follows a nonessentialist path discerning a series of distinctions of art/nonart, in which something is always left over, a content implicitly left unthematized by form; and that the "end" comes about when there is no longer such a potential to be articulated, at which point the whole process is a topic for thought rather than art, although art too can raid its own past for material. In my version of Hegel, postclassical art (whether Christian or pagan) comes to thematize moments that Greek art could not—spiritual and psychological interiority, or the prosaic, secular world of ordinary humans and nature. This does not mean, however, that it operates in nonaesthetic mode, outside mediation by art or individual artworks. Its very medium of "iconic" symbols can reflexively signify its *inability* to grasp the deeper truth (as with art of the sublime, or the Egyptian pyramid and Greek temple, and so on). To cite Wallace Stevens, "the absence of imagination had/Itself to be imagined."⁵⁸ Henrich understands Hegelian "mediation" and reflection very differently. In his view, mediation entails a *complete* self-relatedness in a dominant subjectivity and without remainder (in this he agrees with Adorno's take on Hegel's "identity-thinking"). Hegel finds such a mediation in ancient Greek art but not apparently later, when artworks must be understood via other mediating terms. Moreover, Hegel does not allow that individual artworks can reflect on themselves; this is another reason why his philosophical approach is inadequate for understanding modernism, much of which involves self-reflective processes.⁵⁹

Clearly, then, I don't see the need to interpret modern art in non-Hegelian terms; as argued in the previous section, a Hegelian account would reflect on the implicit reflexion in the form of an artwork, a process that might or might not come to an end. Leaving this disagreement aside, let me instead take up Henrich's alternative proposal. He suggests revising

Hegel's theory of presentation (*Präsentation, Darstellung*), at the same time holding on to the idea that modern art is *partial*, that is, not a transparent mediation of subject-object: what art presents is an incomplete rapprochement between subjectivity and its ontological foundations (to simplify a complex narrative). On the basis of this hermeneutic take on modernity—different from Heidegger's, open to subjectivity, nonapocalyptic—he then proceeds to give a stratospheric overview of some tendencies in modernist art. Modernist works suppose that mediation—the interpenetration of subject and object—is never guaranteed in advance: mediated things and subjective mediation tend to fall apart, with a resultant emphasis either on concrete things or else on subjective activity. The artist is faced with a choice of either presenting a subjectivity which will always find its limits, or else alluding to an inexplicable ground of both world and self.⁶⁰ On the one hand, subjective “construction” (Constructivism, Cubism), Expressionism, and Surrealism, or investigation of narrative and linguistic artifice (Henrich mentions Proust and Beckett here, and for the earlier moments, music and lyric as well).⁶¹ On the other, a world of objects and their relation to self, via techniques of defamiliarization or of collage, or a concern with color and image for their own sake, or a turn to material as such.⁶² Ultimately, form—in particular, the image—itself becomes problematic in contemporary art, which “must be form and the breach of form at once . . . an apparently paradoxical striving of form against itself”; that accounts incidentally for some of the intense pathos peculiar to such a self-reflexive art.⁶³ Henrich's highly condensed account provides an alternative, then, to Adorno's strict dialectic of form and material, though one that—as with Adorno—is open to social reality rather than turning away to a “higher” world of aestheticized enjoyment.⁶⁴

That is Henrich writing in a context shaped by the early 1960s and especially by movements in French painting. It demonstrates, I think, the difficulty of giving a general philosophical description of adventures in modernism and of representing them as specifically “post-Hegelian” (even so his sketch of modernism appeals surprisingly little to Hegel). In any event, Henrich's recent book *Essay on Art and Life* (*Versuch über Kunst und Leben*) offers fewer hostages to artistic fortune by abstaining from almost all reference to artists or movements in art. More significantly, the earlier orientation to—and break with—Hegel has gone by the board.⁶⁵ Second, even if Henrich is right that art can be seen as a partial insight into or expression of some fundamental ontological condition, one might still criticize him for ceding aesthetics to hermeneutics (though he might also be justified in this). Lastly, despite his focus on subjectivity and self-reflexion—though perhaps in deference to the notion of “great” art he invokes—he pays no attention either to the process of art's self-

definition, or to its distinction and status *as* art, both of which fuel the dialectics of modernism.

I pass on to a version with less metaphysical freight, one that speaks not of *Weltverständnis* but—more pragmatically—of “the *artworld*,” that decidedly welcomes the “play” of posthistorical art, focuses attention on practical definition, and (not least) expressly recalls Hegel. Arthur Danto’s ingenious approach to the continuing echoes for us of Hegelian “endism” has gradually evolved since his groundbreaking 1964 essay on “The Artworld.” It seems to have come as a surprise to Danto—fastidious “analytic” aesthetician that he is—to discover that his own thinking should at a certain point resonate with Hegel’s grand metaphysics of art (except as we have seen that it is much less metaphysical, often more procedural and emergent, than is commonly assumed). Without going into detail, what features of his own theory led him to claim—indeed, welcome—such a conjunction?

First, there is a general parallel Danto himself came to draw between the Hegelian conception of art and his own. Hegel speaks of how today we try to understand the *content* of art, along with its *means of presentation* (*Darstellungsmittel*), and also their mutual *adequacy* or *inadequacy*—which incidentally is not the same as “aesthetic worth,” whatever *that* might mean (VA 1:25/A 1:11). Danto compares this to his own attempt in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (1981) to come up with conditions for something to have the status of art: “To be a work of art is to be (i) *about* something and (ii) to *embody its meaning*.”⁶⁶ The “aboutness” of a work may be called “representation.” “Embodiment” is compared to Frege’s *Farbung*, beyond *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*; though in *Transfiguration* Danto also brings to bear Nelson Goodman, whose notion of expression as “metaphorical exemplification” would do some of the same work. The point, at any rate, is to thematize how meaning not merely *has* a perceptual (“sensuous”) correlate or “symptom,” but is also *exemplified* there, in a reflexive relation of some kind: we do not perceive just the body—or the physical work of art—but understand it as expressing a meaning or else an attitude toward that meaning. (I merely note in passing how Danto thus permits reflexivity in the Hegelian artwork where Henrich does not.) Both content and mode of presentation require interpretation: the meaning does not lie in its face, so to speak. Furthermore, all three terms—artwork, making, interpretation—are constrained historically. They require an “artworld”—an atmosphere, tradition, or theory—to be put to use; none exists in a vacuum. Danto considers such aesthetic historicism in fact one of Hegel’s keenest insights.⁶⁷

There is a good deal more to Danto’s theory, though I will just touch on four points.

1. Hegel mentions the “adequacy” or lack of fit between mode of presentation and meaning, a normative emphasis alien to Danto. Yet it partially corresponds to Danto’s focus on the identification of the artwork, that is, *as art*: he speaks of “the ‘is’ of artistic identification,” when we interpret not merely the meaning of a work but also (if no more than tacitly) its *counting as art* to begin with. Whether *anything* could in principle count as art—given that (as Danto claims) interpretation “constitutes” artworks—is a question to which I must return.

2. What is the status of Danto’s own theory? Is it a theory about imitation? Expression? Form? In fact, it seems more a theory *about* theories, chief among them theories of art. He writes of a shift from “imitation” to “expression,” or again, to a modernist emphasis on the material reality of the work, where the new theory matches (follows, legitimizes) the new practice.⁶⁸ His *own* metatheory—in its Hegelian key, perhaps—sounds an “expressivist” note, however, inasmuch as it takes artworks essentially to be of, and about, their time and to be construed as such.⁶⁹

3. Danto posits meaning as intentional, that is, constructed rather than natural or devolving upon merely perceptual qualities (if there are any such qualities). The distinction between artworks and “real things” cannot therefore appeal to natural kinds for its ontology. Exactly how we are to explore this terra incognita of “spiritual kinds” is a crucial question, to which little attention has been paid.⁷⁰

4. Danto adopts a cognitive conception of art. In particular, art is taken as embodying self-knowledge: though whether “we” come to know ourselves in or through art, or whether the knower is humanity, or spirit, or a nation or culture, are questions left vague in his expositions. Clearly Hegel shares with Danto such a cognitive bent: he values spiritual self-knowledge, ultimately in a transparent or absolute spirit.

Let me turn to the second main conjunction Danto sees between his project and Hegel’s (besides a theory of artistic representation): the topos of an end to art. Danto understands this in narrative terms (where Hegel might not, as we’ve seen). But we should note straightaway that Danto is quite clear that it is not the *death* of art, only its end—the end of a certain story: “It was . . . consistent with the story coming to an end that everything should live happily ever after, where happiness almost means that there were no more stories to tell.”⁷¹ Danto’s Hegelian conversion dates from 1984, and his essay “The End of Art.”⁷² There he charts a long series of transitions in art (and theory) from 1300 to 1960 or so, at which point “art achieved a philosophical sense of its own identity,” with painting in a lead role. His narrative presupposes at least one essential characterization of art, namely, that it is *cognitive* in function, part of that including self-knowledge. In particular, modernism comprises a project of self-definition,

that is, where the artwork tends to thematize its own medium, technique, generic form, and so on (compare my sense 4, above).⁷³ At any rate, as Danto sees it, the exigency for self-definition had by 1960 run out of steam. From the inauguration of Pop, with Warhol as its John the Baptist, art becomes “as one with its own philosophy.” The long history of art has ended, in and on its own terms, not because of any philosophical blandishment. It might seem that art vanishes at this point—and indeed the 1984 essay does speak of art’s becoming “vaporized in a dazzle of pure thought about itself,”⁷⁴ while another essay wonders whether *it* could qualify as the last artwork. But Danto also suggests, not that philosophy here takes art over in an ultimate “disenfranchisement,” but rather that it is severed from (art) criticism, resting content now to leave art as it is (compare Belting, 4b, above). Moreover, far from tending toward the condition of conceptual art (*déjà su* all over again), art enters an era of pluralism, where anything goes, there being no longer any historical necessity for particular styles of production. Such “posthistorical” art might not constitute a golden age, Danto admits. “You can’t have everything!” as the last sentence of his *After the End of Art* puts it, even if in principle you can have *anything*.⁷⁵ But it is and continues to be a happy ending, Danto happily concludes.

Let me just mention two possible objections. First, to some people Danto’s professed essentialism seems at odds with his professed historicism and, indeed, with his philosophy of history. I think the charge is unfounded. But that is just what you would expect of me, since Danto’s view of art and art theory as emergent and nonteleological is close to the one I have presented not only as plausible but also as Hegel’s own: the process of determining what *counts as* art (or a theory of art), such that it constrains, explicates, or legitimizes the production and reception of artworks, is itself thoroughly historical. An externalist account can accommodate the formation of norms of usage and practice (as the previous section argued); neither art nor the concept “art” emerges fully armed from the head of Zeus. We can be pragmatists on that score: context is what sanctions meaning and authority, but in any event there is no final court to which we can appeal, let alone a possible counterexample (to what rule?).⁷⁶ Indeed, because the very notion of “art” or of “artwork” is historical in character, it is quite possible that the artworld will become so far-out pluralist that we should do well to give it another name altogether (as suggested by my speculations about Hegelian historiography in the previous section). Terms such as “art” and “artwork” would then be outmoded. Just as there was “art” *before* art, in the medieval world, say (and Hans Belting’s writing on religious imagery has influenced Danto), so there might be “art” *after* art, that is, a repeated drawing of distinctions within a history and an artworld—or else perhaps a practice better called

something else entirely. Such open thinking seems alien to philosophers in quest of counterexamples, who silently presuppose a fixed reality and description (on whose authority?). But I don't think it is *un-Hegelian*, even if Hegel would likely balk at what, almost 200 years after his own end, passes as art in our contemporary artworld (or artworlds in the plural). Is *anything* allowed, therefore? No, for it all depends on which sort of aesthetic differences make a difference (for those in the artworld). . . .

That introduces a second sort of objection to Danto's account. Even if it's true that not everything would count *as* art, as what art can be *about*, mere distinction within the artworld sounds pretty thin as a description, and perhaps of minor or elitist interest. Moreover, Hegel thought that art must convey a sense of what deeply mattered to a community, whereas even the artworld is not heavily invested in some of its gallery events (save in a monetary sense). To put in a sentence what would require another essay: artistic differentiation reveals something about the population for which such distinctions make a difference. As Danto says, viewing Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* allows us to understand something about what it was like in 1963—or for that matter about the society that finds a later retrospective important. To take art to be immanent in art history is also to see it as immanent in history in a wider sense. “Versions of pastness/pastoral” hints precisely at this imbrication of aesthetic sophistication within a broader view of human significance. And if, after all, the artworld has itself become peripheral, that too tells us something about society.⁷⁷

Danto's overall contribution has been to articulate the logic of what he calls “representation,” by which the present in constituting the past also constitutes itself. He detects a shift from hermeneutic practices (which are “about” something) to a new pluralist play where no discrete content is involved. Yet for my part, I see no reason why this entire process shouldn't repeat itself, so that we can have representations *about* that very movement, following a new need for “self-definition.” Pluralism becomes in some sense what much art is now *about*. We cannot of course foresee what these emergent representations might look like. But I think it likely that the career of Hegel's “end of art” topos is not yet over. If nothing else, it gives philosophers of art something to do.

In sum, these two attempts at charting modern and modernist tendencies in the light of Hegelian categories show that there is life yet in the “end of art” topos. Henrich's sketch would transpose the account of modernist art into philosophical terms which demand assessment in their own right. Oddly, he does not take account of the definitional crisis afflicting art in the last fifty years or so. By comparison, Danto gives up fewer hostages to metaphysical fortune, and his theory of representation accommodates definitional issues, not merely about necessary and sufficient con-

ditions for considering something art (as such), but also about how art-making and interpretation may be distinguished. There remains an air of paradox over whether he is an essentialist in art or philosophy. He does not suppose that art must remain the same, does not prefer one theory of art over another; and yet he assumes that there will remain a use for calling something “art” or an “artwork.” Art is “essentially past” in just that sense: it interprets what has been said and done in its name. We might wonder what it might be for art to be past in a deeper sense, when its name has become ideological or empty and another description better fits its theory and practice. But unless I am mistaken, we are not there yet.

Postscript: On Hegel’s Attitude to Contemporary Tendencies in Art

Is it really true, as Henrich contends, that Hegel shifted from pessimism about art’s prospects to a more accommodationist stance? We know that he did come to take a greater part in the cultural life of the city, rushing off (as his students noted) to the opera after his classes, and so on; but does that indicate a basic change of conception? There seems little alteration of tone between 1820–21 and 1823. In both lecture series Goethe is referred to admiringly, and the last stage of romantic art is envisaged as a putting on stage of “the persons of all times . . . as configurations of our own spirit”;⁷⁸ or again, “the human breast is the eternal mirror of all substantiality and truth.” In the 1823 series, the artist becomes a “*tabula rasa*,” whose own interests are however rooted in *Humanus* or “universal humanity, human feeling [*Gemüth*] in its fullness and truth.”⁷⁹ In the 1826 series, humor (*der Humor*) becomes the last step, as an opportunity for the exercise of subjective inspiration (*Einfälle*), while for the first time “*irony*” is expressly thematized. Brigitte Hilmer maintains that there is evidence too of a basic change of tone from religiosity toward secularity: Hegel speaks of “inwardness” rather than “religious thematics,” and there is greater emphasis on secular declension into social relations (ranging love, fidelity, and honor under the rubric of courage, rather than seeing them as modulations of divine love).⁸⁰ The final lecture series (1828–29) completes the separation of religion and art, and gives the “romantic” a fuller place.⁸¹ Generally, Hegel displays a growing interest in the symbolic and romantic worldviews, and no more than a dutiful attitude toward the classical—as if that were frozen in time, its “cold pastoral” leaving *us* cold as well (but then, the eternal return in Keats’s “Ode to a Grecian Urn” is not entirely festive either). Last, Rückert as well as Goethe are made to

exemplify “objective humour,” an ironic though positive attitude to the “*dramatis personae*” on our poetic world-stage.

In short, even if “objective humour” seems to open up new directions, for Hegel such art is resolutely secular, not at all heroic or “great” (in some Heideggerian sense, say). That conclusion finds support in the work of Walter Jaeschke on secularization in Hegel’s philosophy of religion, and of Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert on similar tendencies in his philosophy of art.⁸² We must, I think, take account of her extended writings, especially since, as the acknowledged expert at the Hegel Archive, she has had a privileged access to the surviving student lecture notes. She makes a comprehensive case for seeing Hegel as *sharpening* rather than softening his thesis of art as past, decisively so in the last two series. In this view, the 1827 *Encyclopaedia* shows Hegel separating art and religion, while the 1828–29 lectures display a new, still-unfolding attitude to art as a secular institution with an exclusively cultural function. Her argument derives some of its force from being yoked with a concerted attack on Hotho’s edition of the *Aesthetics*. Not only does Hotho obscure variations between different lecture series (she contends), oriented as he is to 1823 and 1826 especially, years in which he personally attended, he also injects his own approach to art, one that would integrate art more fully into the political regime and emphasize the normative judgment of artworks and great artists’ masterpieces in particular. By contrast, Hegel resolutely keeps judgments of taste out of his lectures, and maintains a strict separation between philosophical reflection on the significance of art and artistic assessment of the value of particular works. Gethmann-Siefert prefers instead a Hegelian picture of art as lowly and historical, embedded in the ambient culture, in the world of the amateur or “philistine” rather than the high art of the “connoisseur”; it is a world fully secularized and devoid of religiosity, focused instead on the “universally human” in feeling, striving, and understanding. “The question of art’s relevance ‘for us,’ not the question as to the adequate stance towards and before art, remains the guiding one in the lectures on aesthetics,” she writes.⁸³ This is to emphasize the quotidian (*Alltäglichkeit*) or “the prose of the world” from which (in the usual picture) the poet is “called on” to escape, as from the nightmare of history. It is the world of opera, for example, which is “in every respect a complete artwork [*ein vollständiges Kunstwerk*]”;⁸⁴ not at all Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, however, whose presumptions are partly borrowed from F. T. Vischer’s attempt to “renew” German art as mythology, a direction wholly alien to Hegel’s take on art. Or again, it is the painterly mode by which the “musicality” of color speaks to us, to our feelings, quite apart from any “high” thematic content or associations. Since the “totality” of the Ideal, located in the “age of heroes,” is no longer visible to us, our at-

itude must remain reflective in mode and merely “partial” (if not in Henrich’s sense of partial disclosure of Being). Art becomes what *we today* can salvage for enjoyment.

In such a perspective, at once disenchanted and fully at home with its sociability, art is not envisaged as preparing us for political roles on the public stage, but rather amounts to the cultivation (*Bildung*) of our intimate feelings for and understanding of others. If the “intellectual consideration” of art announces a new dawn, therefore, it remains very much “grey in grey.”⁸⁵ That too is how we might construe “objective humour,” namely, as opening up alien cultures or worldviews, with the artist (and audience) at home not in specific worldviews but rather in several or all of them. Our approach is historical through and through. It is of a piece with Hegel’s praise for the layout of Schinkel’s new museum, built just across from his own house on the Spree: the museum fostered neither the quasi-Romantic enjoyment intended by the architect himself, nor a devotion to the pedagogical scholarship ordained by the architectural historian Alois Hirt. The museum would invite instead a mediated, reflective enjoyment, as the modern citizen passes with interest through the galleries of alien cultures and strange (yet human) feelings.

Such a prospect might seem all too bourgeois and Biedermeier for words. But we need only compare it with Tolstoy’s well-known stance that art should renounce elitism, in form and content alike; that the “essence” of an artwork is to communicate universal feelings between human beings (“taken apart from content”). Indeed, where Tolstoy rejected the modern worldview (or “religion,” as he termed it) of secularism in favor of a populist Christianity, we might rather hold that such disenchanted art simply displays secular phenomena all humans can sympathize with. Granted, the heroic or high modernist project that succeeded Romanticism has by now vanished over the horizon, along with the dynamics and intensities Henrich detected in it. The perspective recommended here appears as flat as the Berlin landscape. . . . On the other hand we should recall Hegel’s intellectual (as well as geographical) circumstances. He may well have praised the historical arrangement of galleries in the new museum—a revolutionary step, and one due to Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, considered the first systematic art historian.⁸⁶ He did *not* praise Rumohr’s materialist conception of art, and in the last lecture series he spends a good deal of time in polemic against Rumohr’s reductive account of allegory and “Ideal,” which was aimed at cutting Winckelmann down to size. Art is *more* than sensation and form, Hegel counters: even in fully secular and humanist garb it retains an ideal aspect or charge. Yet neither would Hegel bend the knee to the “new saint, *Humanus*,” a phrase he seems to use ironically rather than with Feuerbachian fervor. Exactly how the two

moments—spirit that is both human and yet quasi-divine, historically determined or “for us” and yet somehow absolute—are to be reconciled constitutes the ultimate paradox of Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, it strikes me, one that is only sharpened within the disenchanted institutions of modern civil society.

That represents a rather baffled conclusion, and indeed there remain all sorts of further problems to mull over. Take Tolstoy’s objection to artworks that presuppose too much knowledge, on the grounds that they block universal access to our formal and thematic sympathy. How can our cultural approach *combine* reflection and feeling, without shifting artworks toward abstraction or some kind of “conceptual” art? Or again, even if we grant that an ecumenical approach can escape aesthetic historicism—the past becomes immediately close less to God than to our own lordly gaze—there remains a whiff of cultural imperialism about it (as De Quincey long ago observed). History—including the history of art—exists just “for us” sympathetic humans, not necessarily “for itself.” Our claim that a speculative consideration fuses empirical and reflective history, the given and the interpreted, might only conceal from us its underlying reflective bias. That was the substance of Hubert Damisch’s complaint, as we’ve seen: the “screen” of culture—*our* culture—blinds us to our own isolated perspective. But as we also observed, trying to escape that island fate would be only to cast another bottled message into the hungry ocean of culture. My own view is that, in some future or other, art and the arts might well change shape, even dissolve altogether. But then again, it is also possible that distinctions between form and content—hence artistic representations “*about*” something, as Danto says—could still be made from the detritus of contemporary culture. We can tell only after the event, of course. And our telling will be a cultural representation and narrative—whoever “we” might turn out to be. Somewhere between what is merely serviceable “for us” and a quasi-divine service, art (or “art”) might still make a name for itself.

Notes

1. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, in a letter to his sisters from Naples, May 28, 1831. To the composer Taubert a few weeks later he wrote: “and it makes me furious that the dreadful state of affairs continues, and that the philosopher [Hegel] who claims that art is now washed up continues to claim that art is now washed up, as if it could simply come to an end!” (*Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen* [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1970], nos. 669 and 675, pp. 430 and 432). Mendelssohn had attended Hegel’s last lecture series in 1828–29; his notes survive but have yet to be published.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 1:151; G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 1:111. References to these editions are abbreviated VA and A, respectively. I sometimes amend Knox's translations.

3. Heidegger's approach remains influential, though I won't take it up here. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), for a discussion under Heidegger's aegis.

4. Fredric Jameson, "'End of Art' or 'End of History,'" in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (London: Verso, 1998), 73–93, at p.76.

5. Martin Donougho, "Hegel's Art of Memory," in *Endings: Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger*, ed. Rebecca Comay and John McCumber (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 139–59, 229–36, at 155.

6. Benedetto Croce, *What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel* (1906; London: Macmillan, 1915), 130. Croce objects especially to the dialectical necessity by which art must come to an end. See "La fine dell'arte nel sistema hegeliano," in his *Storia dell'estetica per saggi* (Bari: Laterza, 1967).

7. Hegel, VA 1:142/A 1:103: "We may well hope that art will always rise to something higher and perfect itself, but as a form art has ceased to be the supreme need of spirit . . . [W]e bend the knee no longer." "For us," art remains something past, "from the standpoint of its highest determination [*nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung*]"—as a religious worldview (Hegel, VA 1:25/A 1:11). See Fred Rush, "Hegel's Conception of the End of Art," in *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2:368–71, at 370.

8. Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel and the 'End of Art,'" *Owl of Minerva* 29, no. 1 (fall 1997): 1–21. Houlgate's view is robustly Tolstoyan, at least in emphasizing representational content over an abstract form which divides and repels ordinary understanding. Both thinkers sort good from bad in modern art according to whether it is accessible to and faithful to ordinary experience; both favor the immediacy of literature and painting over the abstractness of music or architecture.

9. Beat Wyss, *Hegel's Art History and the Critique of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially part 3, "Reason Outschemed," and the end of the "Epilogue," "*Credo quia absurdum*." It is difficult to find a rational reply to this sort of thing.

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1976), 263, 279.

11. William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral: A Study of the Pastoral Form in Literature* (1935; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 25.

12. Dieter Henrich, "The Relevance of Hegel's Aesthetics," in *Hegel*, ed. Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 199–207, at 204 (from *Hegel-Studien* 11 [1974]). Henrich goes on to quote (205–6) the line from the *Philosophy of History*: "If it were permitted to be nostalgic, it would be for such a land, for such conditions."

13. "Die Kunst überlebt sich selbst" (Liebelt Ms 30), cited in Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, "Einleitung: Gestalt und Wirkung von Hegels Ästhetik," in

G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siebert (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998), 15–224, at 199.

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 455.

15. Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 221.

16. See John McCumber, *Poetic Interaction: Language, Freedom, Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), chapter 4, esp. p. 99, though McCumber goes on to argue that this also shows the inability of the work of art to mediate political reality. Other means are required.

17. T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), especially chapter 6, on Jackson Pollock, bearing the title “The Unhappy Consciousness.” “Modernity for Hegel is that moment at which contingency and self-sameness confront one another as tragic opposites” (329). Clark expressly cites the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, so invoking a possible resolution of that antithesis, but posed in art rather than religion.

18. In “The Semiotics of Hegel,” *Clio* 11, no. 4 (1982), I argue that hermeneutic and semiotic functions are complementary; sensuous signification is required for transmission of meaning, and there must be meaning to signify at all.

19. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, ed. and trans. H. S. Harris and T. M. Knox (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979); G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I*, eds. K. Düsing and H. Kimmerle, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 6 (1975), 287.

20. In *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), Gregg Horowitz proposes a reading of Hegel at once close to and far from mine. He has a double starting point: first, that the “normal” condition of art comprises a “generational transmission” (6) of form and content alike—what I have called its “hermeneutic” function—and second, the irretrievable loss of such a function and its gradual replacement with philosophical reflection. The latter point carries an Adornian charge, both as *potential* and as *accusation*: nature promises to wreak its revenge on identity thinking, and Hegel’s philosophical aesthetics is an intimation of this and yet its “guilty” warding off. I agree that nature is both a categorial distinction (the sign in the Rockies that declares “You are now entering Nature”) and the thing that is distinguished. Yet I think Hegel’s procedure is wise to the paradoxes of self-differentiation, as I try to show here and in my second section.

21. Thus Romanticism (the new mythology, the Idea of the infinite, and so on) constitutes a cult of sorts; so does the “new saint, *Humanus*,” but more as parody, the reality being the humanism immanent in such enactment.

22. Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9, 11.

23. As William Morris puts it in his “Gothic Architecture—An 1889 Address” (Kelmscott, 1893), 66. See also Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), 170: “The history of architecture is the material of architecture.”

24. Manfredo Tafuri, "Modern Architecture and the Decline of History," chapter 1 of his *Theories and History of Architecture* (London: Granada, 1980), 28.

25. See Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

26. Hubert Damisch, "Robinsonades II: Le véritable Robinson," preface to Jean Dubuffet, *Prospectus et tous écrits suivants* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), and translated in *October* 85 (1998): 29–40. See also "A Conversation with Hubert Damisch," *October* 85 (1998): 3–17, at 10: "Duchamp, the consummate Hegelian, said that art no longer had any internal necessity; it was now a pure convention. . . . Dubuffet . . . constructed his own 'necessity.'"

27. G. W. F. Hegel, *Ésthetique* (Paris: Montaigne, 1944), 24. This very loosely translates Lasson's *Die Idee und das Ideal*, vol. 10 of G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegels Sämtliche Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1932), 19–20.

28. Damisch, "Robinsonades II," 32–34 (translation amended).

29. Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss*, 209. I should add that instead of Dubuffet, Horowitz selects as his (for him dialectical) exemplar the installation artist Ilya Kabakov, in particular his 1993 work *The Boat of My Life*; see chapter 6. But that too amounts to a "Robinsonade," I should say, albeit one tossed on the seas of a historical exigency. (T. J. Clark likewise would call dialectic to the rescue, at least in its contingent form as "mediation.")

30. Damisch's call for different art practices—not a dialectical inversion but "fold against fold"—and equally his admired Dubuffet's beachcomber style, remain individualist in mode, opposed to the presumption of "our" culture.

31. "Der Stoff der vergangenen Zeit ist ausgearbeitet, ausgesungen, nur der gegenwärtige Geist ist frisch und neu" (Ascheberg 1820/21), in G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. Helmut Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 182.

32. Note that Adorno picks up on this word—doubtless thanks to the Hegelian connection—and generalizes from its suggested coincidence of sheer externality and sheer subjectivity: modernism as a precarious, almost sublime encounter between self and world.

33. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1827), in Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, 19:393 (section 560).

34. See my "Remarks on 'Humanus heisst der Heilige' . . .," *Hegel-Studien* 17 (1982): 214–25.

35. On the "paradox of essential pastness," see my "Hegel on the Historicity of Art," in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 2:365–70. In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel makes the playful point that essence is what is "logically past"—the context being the paradigm shift from the "logic of being" (book 1) to the reflective and dualist "logic of essence" (book 2).

36. Hegel, VA 1:362/A 1:264, referring to the "Heroic Age," though generalizing to all arts and their backward glance.

37. The problem is the inverse of that with Hegel's speculative *Satz*: ordinary language makes distinctions which, however, are ultimately of no independent account.

38. In his excellent study *Hegel, Literature, and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Allen Speight construes Hegel's theory of action in terms of *retrospectivity*—even the agent must reconstruct its implicit meaning—and *theatricality*—the agent more or less consciously plays a role—along with *recognition* (which I leave aside here). The first appears most clearly in tragic action, the second in comedy. We must be careful, however, not to read artistic form back into social content—as it were, projecting chapter 7 of the *Phenomenology* and its treatment of genre under “Kunstreligion” into a treatment of objective spirit (in chapter 6). The stage is immanent in but also outside the society it mimetically (re)presents.

39. In fact, this is Nicolas Hayoz's paraphrase—an epigraph to his *Société, politique, et état dans la perspective de la sociologie systématique de Niklas Luhmann* (Geneva: University of Geneva, 1991)—which I prefer to the original: “Wir erkennen die Realität, weil wir aus ihr ausgespart sind—wie aus dem Paradies,” in “Neue Entwicklungen in der Systemtheorie,” *Merkur* 470 (1988): 291–300, at 294.

40. Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* 6.

41. Ernst Gombrich, “The Father of Art History,” in his *Tributes: Interpreters of Our Cultural Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 51–69 (original address given in 1977). See also Gombrich's more comprehensive assault in his *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

42. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), First Draft (1822 and 1828), 12–24. The other reflective modes are the Enlightenment practices of (1) *universal* and (2) *pragmatic* history, followed by (3) *critical* history, that is, a metahistorical look at sources. Other examples of “specialized” history focus on law and religion.

43. “The Externality of the Ideal in Relation to the Public,” in Hegel, *VA* 1:341–62/A 1:263–80.

44. See Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 103ff.

45. See Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), a translation of *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (1995). For Luhmann, art as system must abstract from all content, and so he sees its origin in ornament and in playful illusion among the ancient Greeks (the optical effect of entasis or columnar swelling, or the “life-likeness” of sculpture and stage painting). The parallel with Hegel is that the process assumes a certain self-reflection, a minimal calculation of effect; meaning is construed as intentional, if not fully intended.

46. Paul Veyne, *Writing History: Essay on Epistemology*, trans. Mina Moore-Rinvulcri (1971; Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984).

47. See the appendix to chapter 4: “History is interested in what has been, because it has been; a point of view to be carefully distinguished from that of the history of literature or of art, which is an axiological discipline, defined within its frontiers with reference to values: it is interested in great artists, in masterpieces” (Veyne, *Writing History*, 66).

48. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985). The point is basic, and is made also by Arthur

Danto's *reductio ad absurdum* of an "ideal chronicler" who lays out the pattern of events once and for all: such a positivist notion simply forgets the standpoint from which such an account is given. See Danto's pioneering *Analytic Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965). The relevance of Danto's theory of representation will also emerge in the next section of my essay.

49. See Hegel, VA 1:393ff./A 1:303ff.: "Vom Symbol überhaupt." Note that even "found" art is displayed or framed in some way—even Dada is repetition, hence a deliberate evincing of an attitude.

50. R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 7, 15ff. As a misunderstanding it is no less dangerous, however, for it can lead to the instrumentalizing of culture. Collingwood does recommend retaining a certain "magical" function for culture, something suppressed by "entertainment," for example. Art is politically too important to be left to expression without function.

51. To gauge the radicality of this process, let us suppose that the notion of scientific rationality likewise emerges over time, only then for it to distinguish between its own internalist and externalist histories: what will happen from then on? Many scientists and philosophers would no doubt hold that "rationality" is supra-historical, and the same throughout history. I take the suggestion from Brigitte Hilmer, "Being Hegelian After Danto," *History and Theory* 37, no. 4 (1998): 71–86, at 79, quoting Danto: "Internally speaking, philosophy does not have a real history." He *would* say that, wouldn't he! The philosopher is vested in his or her philosophy. The artist is similarly vested in Art.

52. See my "Hegel on the Historicity of Art" (and also on the "paradoxes" of the Ideal and of [neo]classicism).

53. Samuel Butler, *Notebooks* (1912), chapter 8, as cited in *The Oxford Book of Quotations* (though I cannot trace the source).

54. Stephen Bungay, *Beauty and Truth: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 71–89: "The End of Art." See also Besançon, *Forbidden Image*, 224: "But even as he marked its death, he defined with phenomenal perspicacity all the paths that nineteenth-century art would take, in the almost futile hope of surviving."

55. Dieter Henrich, "Art and Philosophy of Art Today: Reflections with Reference to Hegel," in *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism: A Collection of Essays*, ed. R. E. Amacher and V. Lange (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 107–33. See also Henrich's "The Relevance of Hegel's Aesthetics," cited in note 12. His much later intervention is entitled *Versuch über Kunst und Leben: Subjektivität—Weltverstehen—Kunst* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2001). There Henrich both deepens his hermeneutics of "subjectivity as process" and relates it to modern tendencies in art—"great art" especially—no longer viewed just in a post-Hegelian perspective. Lecture 6 is devoted to "the thesis of the end to art," but in fact more attention gets paid to the "thesis of the end of subjectivity" prominent since Marx and Nietzsche. Alas, artistic references are if anything even less specific than before; few names or dates are mentioned in over 350 pages of abstract exposition.

56. Willi Oelmüller likewise holds that Hegel's modern artist, tied to no style

or thematics, prepares the way for “free” (*zweckfrei*) art (Kant), not to be equated with the “mere play of contingency and inspirations”: see Oelmüller’s *Die unbefriedigte Aufklärung: Beiträge zu einer Theorie der Moderne, von Lessing, Kant und Hegel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 240–64, at 260–61.

57. Henrich reports that since his original essay he had seen unpublished manuscripts that show Hegel’s “diagnosis of the art of the future” to date from 1828: see Henrich, “Art and Philosophy of Art Today,” 114n. See also “The Relevance of Hegel’s Aesthetics,” 200.

58. Wallace Stevens, “The Plain Sense of Things,” in *Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: Library of America, 1997), 428. The poem concludes: “all this/Had to be imagined as an inevitable knowledge,/ Required, as a necessity requires.”

59. Henrich, “Art and Philosophy of Art Today,” 128. Art overcomes itself.

60. These alternatives resemble Hegel’s subjective and objective humor. But we must remember that Henrich breaks with Hegel in making the *being* of subjectivity prior to subject-object relations.

61. Surrealism displays subjectivity not directly but as implicated in automatic processes (Henrich, “Art and Philosophy of Art Today,” 125).

62. For this last he cites “posttachistic painting”—presumably the Nouveau Réalisme of such figures as Yves Klein or Jean Tinguely, who stressed the grittiness of real things (much as Johns and Rauschenberg did).

63. Henrich, “Art and Philosophy of Art Today,” 130–31.

64. For all Adorno owes to Hegel, his aesthetic theory has little sympathy for a Hegelian take on art. He thinks that the latter (a) is biased toward Neoclassical content, and (b) engineers spirit’s dominance over natural beauty. Henrich might well have agreed with that, if not with Adorno’s version of modernism emphasizing the “material” and an autonomy not for its own sake but in tacit protest against an oppressive society. Henrich’s dialectic (if it can still be called that once strict mediation is abandoned) seems much looser, at this stage still retaining a certain allegiance to Hegel even as he shifts to adopting a hermeneutics of subjectivity as tacitly “familiar” with the world that grounds it.

65. In *Versuch über Kunst und Leben*, Henrich now proposes *five* basic starting points for the “partial presentation of subjectivity”: (1) art that is *engagé* or in protest against ordinary life; (2) playful or ironic self-intensification (Dada perhaps) or exploitation of new media; (3) formalist experiment; (4) subjective intimations of a transcendent order (for example, Cézanne, Kandinsky); and (5) a probative integration—within and beyond the artwork—of subjectivity and the “world” it both projects and finds itself within. See lecture 7 on “Transformations in Modern Art,” especially 289–306.

66. Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 194–95. The subtitle itself alludes to Hegel’s philosophy of world history.

67. It might help to cite another (if more literal-minded) analytic aesthetician, Noël Carroll, who discerns *five* elements in Danto’s theory, some of which—b, c, and d—overlap with “embodiment.” X is a work of art if (a) it is about something, to which (b) it expresses an attitude or point of view (equals style), (c) by

rhetorical ellipsis (or metaphor), (d) which invites interpretation, where (e) works and interpretations require historical and theoretical context. See Noël Carroll, "Essence, Expression, and History: Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art," in *Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 79–106, at 80. In fact, Carroll phrases this as a strict definition ("if and only if"), and then hunts for counterexamples and self-contradictions. As will become evident, I think Danto is much more subtle and pragmatic in his approach: in his writing his feel for history and practical context belies his analytic idiom.

68. The point is well made by Gregg Horowitz and Tom Huhn in their introduction to Arthur C. Danto, *The Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste* (Amsterdam: G&B Arts International, 1998), 1–56: they speak of Danto's "metaphilosophy of art, philosophy, and criticism" (4). Danto gives an overview of the history of theories in "The End of Art" (1984), in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 81–115; see 101–2 for his characterization of "expression."

69. Carroll argues that Danto espouses an expressionism of sorts, but he takes this as related to emotivism. Interestingly, that seems to be how Danto understands Expressionism as a theory: it is what qualifies the theory as one of "natural types," presumably because it supposes a factual link between emotion and its expression. I don't think Danto himself is wedded to such a view: rather, his is a theory about "cultural types." My own view is that he is expressivist only in the weaker, Wölfflinian sense that "not everything is possible at any one time." How that squares with his declared essentialism I return to below.

70. The question receives due emphasis in by far the best piece I have read on Danto and Hegel, Brigitte Hilmer's "Being Hegelian After Danto," at 75ff. I endorse her general position—that Hegel's reflexive methodology operates both to critique traditional ontological distinctions and yet to recommend a certain kind of essentialism.

71. Arthur C. Danto, "Art After the End of Art" (1993), in *The Wake of Art*, 115–28, at 119. Many critics of Danto (as with readers of Hegel) confuse "end" with "death," as Jonathan Gilmore notes in *The Life of Style: Beginnings and Endings in the Narrative History of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 136–37. He names Beryl Lang, Daniel Herwitz, Richard Shusterman, and Stephen Davies as among the culprits.

72. See "The End of Art" in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. Other texts by Danto that develop this theme include "Approaching the End of Art" in *The State of the Art* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1987), "Narratives and the End of Art" in *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), and "The Shape of Artistic Pasts: East and West" in *Philosophical Imagination and Cultural Memory: Appropriating Historical Tradition*, ed. Patricia Cook (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

73. This is a sticky point, for Danto distinguishes his narrative from Clement Greenberg's formalist—better, purist—dialectic: see Danto's *After the End of Art*, chapters 5 and 6; and Hilmer's "Being Hegelian After Danto," 74n. Jonathan

Gilmore perceives (*The Life of Style*, 139–40) an “occlusion” of narrative of progressive self-awareness and an “internalist” narrative of style, the specifically “Western” tradition from Giotto to Warhol: “Art reaches an ending, not because it reaches the limits to the naturalist or modernist [i.e., Vasari or Greenberg] developments, but because the style that mandated these developments has emerged into view” (140). By “emergence” Gilmore means the explicitation of potential in a style, hence an objective reaching of limits.

74. Danto, “The End of Art,” 111.

75. Danto, *After the End of Art*, 217.

76. As a practicing critic Danto has shown little patience with some so-called “artworks,” where the game seems to be whether or not the game of art is being played. But there are no fixed features marking such nonart; it’s a matter of judgment, a judgment offered for the reader’s judgment, within a shared artworld.

77. Much more needs to be said. I thank Stephen Houllgate for putting the objection, though I doubt my answer would satisfy him, with regard either to Danto or to Hegel; I am not sure it satisfies me. But I’d note that historicism does yield standards for criticism. A purist modernism, together with its theorists and appreciators, all shun historical contextualization. The critic can interpret and judge them as doing just that, in a historically determinate context.

78. Ascheberg, 182, in Hegel, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*.

79. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), 204.

80. See Brigitte Hilmer, *Scheinen des Begriffs: Hegels Logik der Kunst* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1997), 187–88. I’d add that a formalist approach to literary archetypes, such as Northrop Frye’s, maintains a quasi-reverential attitude to Literature, as the imaginative armature that powers the declension from high (epic) to low (realist, naturalist), but equally its *ricorso* to the divine—though Frye also has it the other way, privileging irony and satiric “anatomy.” I write about allegory and secularism in my “Hegel as Philosopher of the Temporal [*irdischen*] World: On the Dialectics of Narrative,” in *Hegel and the Tradition: Essays in Honour of H. S. Harris*, ed. M. Baur and J. Russon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 111–39.

81. The 1830 *Encyclopaedia* separates out the “romantic” for the first time, understood as the successor to classical art (replacing religion proper, as in 1827).

82. Walter Jaeschke, “Kunst und Religion,” in *Die Flucht in den Begriff: Materialien zu Hegels Religionsphilosophie*, eds. F. W. Graf and F. Wagner (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1982), 163–95, especially 184ff. For Gethmann-Siefert, see “H. G. Hotho: Kunst als Bildungserlebnis und Kunstgeschichte in systematischer Absicht—oder die entpolitisierte Version der Erziehung des Menschen,” in *Kunsterfahrung und Kulturpolitik im Berlin Hegels*, ed. O. Pöggeler and A. Gethmann-Siefert (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983), 229–61; “Hegel über Kunst und Alltäglichkeit: Zur Rehabilitierung der schönen Kunst und des ästhetischen Genusses,” *Hegel-Studien* 28 (1993): 215–65; and “Einleitung: Gestalt und Wirkung von Hegels Ästhetik” (1998), especially clxx–ccxiv.

83. Gethmann-Siefert, “Hegel über Kunst und Alltäglichkeit,” 265. Gethmann-Siefert claims that Hegel defends the philistine (*der Banause*) against the expert (*der Kenner*). The pejorative “philistine” is usually contrasted with an educated appreciation for art, though here she seems polemically to mean something like

“life-enhancing,” rather than the rule-bound scholarship that Romanticism had always detested (genius *sets* the rules, as Kant has it). At issue in Hegel is the somewhat Adornian paradox as to whether an autonomous art can also serve social functions and harbor social significance, and if so, whether the artwork might still have a representational function—an “aboutness” (Danto), serving to distinguish artworks from “real things.” Gethmann-Siefert seems to assume that art and artwork, whether for us in general or specifically for late Hegel, need be neither autonomous nor “distinctive” (in a Dantoesque sense).

84. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1826), eds. A. Gethmann-Siefert, J. I. Kwon, and K. Berr (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 246.

85. See my “Remarks on ‘Humanus heisst der Heilige . . . ,’” 220.

86. Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen* (Berlin: Nicolai’sche Buchhandlung, 1827–31); Hegel was reacting to the just-published first volume of this work. For Rumohr’s overall importance, see Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 116–26.

Freedom from Nature? Post-Hegelian Reflections on the End(s) of Art

J. M. Bernstein

Hegel's thesis that art is consciousness of plight has been confirmed beyond anything he could have envisioned. Thus his thesis was transformed into a protest against his own verdict on art. . . . The darkening of the world makes the irrational of art rational: radically darkened art.

—T. W. Adorno

There is an intense elective affinity between Hegel's announcement of the end of art and the situation of twentieth-century art, especially modernist art, as if the fate that Hegel had proclaimed was finally realized, or perhaps just realized again, with the social eclipse of the project of modernist painting that occurred sometime in the middle part of the last century. So much might be gathered from the titles of important recent works: Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art* (1997), T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea* (1999), Yves-Alain Bois, "Painting: The Task of Mourning" (1993), or, somewhat less portentously, Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (1986). That the two most demanding works of twentieth-century aesthetics—Martin Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" and T. W. Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*—explicitly locate their reflections in the context of Hegel's end of art doctrine makes the thought irresistible.

Something of art has ended. The debate is not about the fact, but its significance: What does it mean to say art has ended? How does that end manifest itself in art? Above all, is that end something we might welcome,

as Hegel welcomed it, or is it something whose eventuality is a cause for concern, even distress, a sign of an intolerable defeat?

What is uncanny about Hegel's doctrine is how perspicuously it projects the terms of the twentieth-century debate. As is well known, when Hegel states that "art is, and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, a thing of the past" (*ILA* 13), by "highest vocation" he means it no longer "satisfies our supreme need" to represent the divine (*ILA* 12), that is, it no longer *can* represent the truth about human beings.¹ And this is because the truth about human beings is that our spiritual life is self-authorizing, free, and self-determining. So the determining fact of modern life, anticipated in Descartes and Kant, but made intersubjective, social, and historical in Hegel, is the discovery of our utterly secular but nonetheless emphatic *freedom from the authority of nature*.² Which is why for Hegel art beauty supplants natural beauty, and the truth of art beauty is its utter mindedness, spirit in the alien form of the sensuous, spirit infusing dead matter with its own vitality.³ Of course, to say so is already to view art from the perspective of its overcoming: in art, spirit is illegitimately bound to its sensuous representation and therefore falsely presented. A full-throated version of this claim occurs in a context where Hegel is fending off the anxious thought that works of art are concoctions of dead matter, and we, generally, "are wont to prize the living more than the dead" (*ILA* 33); if this is so, and it is, then would we not be bound to nature's authority, its gift of life (at least), in opposition to dead matter? How can we care about art above nature?

We must admit, of course, that the work of art has not in itself movement and life. An animated being in nature is within and without an organization appropriately elaborated down to its minutest parts, while the work of art attains the semblance of animation on its surface only, but within is common stone, or wood and canvas, or as in the case of poetry, is idea, uttering itself in speech and letters. But this aspect, viz., its external existence, is not what makes a work into a production of fine art; it is a work of art only in as far as, being the offspring of mind, it continues to belong to the realm of mind, has received the baptism of the spiritual, and only represents that which has been moulded in harmony with the mind. (*ILA* 33)

There is something presumptuous, ominous, and ambiguous in Hegel's confident statement. What is presumptuous is the claim that *all* the animation of the work of art derives from it being an offspring of the mind, as if art's sensuous immediacy were not a factor in its animation.⁴ Is not sensuous immediacy precisely the way in which abstract thought achieves

feeling vitality? And does that not mean that abstract thought on its own lacks something, say incarnation? What is ominous in Hegel's statement is the idea that it is a *condition* for nature to become a pure vehicle of mindedness that it be dead (stone, wood, canvas, sounds, and words), as if spirit could only assure itself of its ultimate and unsurpassable authority through the slaughter of nature. What is eerie here is the way in which the metaphorical murder of nature as authority converges with the medium of art being dead nature. Only if nature is really dead, so to speak, can the material basis of art which founds its sensuous character be an empty husk, a corpse, leaving only the mindedness of works as demanding attention, so that in works, finally, it is an issue of the mind knowing itself, and with that recognition the claim of art to be divine is forever surpassed. But all that assumes a negative response to claims about the role of the sensuous in providing animation for ideas. Hegel cannot think both that art receives its animation from spirit *alone* and that art is surpassed thereby, since the "thereby" would be otiose if spirit "alone" were the source of vitality. Even for Hegel, despite himself and against the grain of his explicit claim, medium-bound sensuousness must play a role in how spirit manifests itself in art (because, say, medium-specificity is what makes artworks symbols rather than signs); but since sensuousness in art is provided by dead nature, then dead nature must play a role in art's animation.⁵ Further, if the authority of spirit reveals itself only in relation to that which it departs *from*, then the authority of spirit is going to be dependent on the presentation of the site of slaughter. In this double way, then, might it not be the case that dead nature belongs to art's animation? Might not the role of dead nature in art strike us, on a second reading, not only as ominous but as riven with ambiguity?

The twentieth-century replays of Hegel's end of art doctrine reiterate the doubleness of this passage, its calm confidence that art belongs to mind, and the anxious insistence that the cost of such belonging is murderous and thus intolerable. My ambition in this essay is to document this thesis, that is, to demonstrate how in facing the end of art a line is drawn between those who find in it the reassurance that art belongs to the mind alone (the position of Arthur Danto and Yves-Alain Bois), and those who find in art's extinction, actual or anticipated, the extinction of the worth of sensuous particulars, and so the worth of the everyday and the ordinary of which modernity was to be a celebration (Adorno). In documenting this ambivalence, I mean to raise the possibility, at least, that the *absolute need* for art concerns not its role in aiding the mind to know itself, but its function as a form of resistance, a reminder, a placeholder, for the claim of sensuous particularity, and so nature, against the claim of self-authorizing mindedness. But this claim would be feeble if something of

what I am claiming as the doubleness of the end of art did not recur even in those proclaiming its rightness. Where then does dead nature hibernate, find refuge for itself, in contemporary art theory? Surely nowhere else than in art's opacity, its enigmaticalness, its resistance to the claims for transparency and discursive legitimation. The opacity of the work of art, that in it which makes direct engagement, actual perception, a necessary condition for encountering at all, stands for our standing need for the forever lost authority of nature. Because I am canvassing a range of thinkers, my account of each will be brief to the point of unfairness.

Danto's Philosophical Displacement

Danto opens *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* with a delightful account of a series of qualitatively identical, hence perceptually indiscernible, red monochromes. He starts with Kierkegaard's account of a work, *The Red Sea*, which depicts the moment after the Israelites have already crossed over and the Egyptians were drowned. Naming some of the other works in the series will give you Danto's idea: *Kierkegaard's Mood*; *Red Square* (a bit of Moscow landscape); *Red Square* (a work of geometrical art); *Nirvana*; *The Red Table Cloth* (by an embittered student of Matisse); and so on.⁶ The point of this story is minimally the same as the point of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, minimalist cubes and tubes, slabs and planks that are identical with their industrial counterparts, or indeed Duchamp's readymades—*Fountain*, but equally the comb, the bottle rack, snow shovel, and others. If the monochromes are sensibly indistinguishable from one another, and from a prepared canvas that is not an artwork, not to speak of a nonart red square (say, one I put on my wall for decoration), then what makes something a work of art, a painting, as distinguished from an object in the world, is not something evident to the eye, it is nothing visual. As Danto states, "Once that was acknowledged [which is what Pop and Minimalism achieved, that acknowledgment in general], the visual arts became detached from the act of vision, and the way was open to fusion with the other arts" (W 59). That is what might be called the "deretinalization thesis" in a nutshell. So, in a certain respect, Danto claims, Pop and Minimalism bring about the end of art—not, of course, the end of art-making; on the contrary, art-making is now free to do whatever it likes, and pluralism becomes the order of the day. So the end of art in some different sense. To clarify this, a little contextualization is necessary.

Danto plausibly tracks the unfolding of modern art as possessing four stages: (1) Cubism, which was narrower than abstractionism in that

it assumed that painting was representational, while asking, at least, why it must remain attached to our optical experience of the visible world, above all perspective. Cubism, we might say, aimed to connect representation to the specific characteristics of painting, namely, the reduction of three dimensions to two, acknowledging thereby the flatness of the canvas. (2) Abstractionism—think Kandinsky—denied representation altogether, but assumed all the conventions of pictorial space, hence the nonrepresentational use of color, line, form, and so on. (3) Abstract expressionism “broke the identification between painting and pictorialism by making the act of painting central, with the work itself but a record of the fierce interaction between artist and pigment” (W57). The final step, of course, is (4) the advent of Pop and Minimalism. Even if this is overly simple, the shape of the story is plausible: keeping representation but dropping the illusion of likeness to ordinary perception of things in space; the dropping of representation but holding to the construction of spaces, depths, movement, the use of line to enclose a space, etc., and so pictorial illusion without representation; then, Abstract Expressionism’s dropping of both pictorial illusion and representation—which is the “action painting” interpretation of Abstract Expressionism. Finally, there is Pop in which all modernism’s severity and asceticism is reversed, wherein all the items, whose systematic taboo had constituted the dynamic history of modernism, come flooding back in. What kind of story is this? What is happening here?

Danto understands this unfolding or history as a *quest*, a quest to discover in art what art is, to discover in painting what is essential to painting, what makes painting painting. To ask this is to ask: from what does painting derive its authority, what is the source or ground of its authority, hence the source or ground of its goodness, what in truly appreciating a painting are we responding to? What about painting is the source of our concern or caring for it? One might say, then, that the history of modernist painting was philosophical, since its ambition was to discover what emphatically distinguished painting from nonpainting (from other arts and from reality); and by any usual account the business of drawing boundaries around activities, distinguishing the real world from illusion, has been from the get-go, since Plato, the business of philosophy.

Modernist art is determined by a theoretical, philosophical quest: to discover the meaning or essence of art. As Danto’s short history makes evident, modernist art aimed at producing novelties, but not novelties for their own sake; rather, novelties that would be revolutionary, with each taboo engendering another idea of painting, another concept of what painting is and means. The combination of novelty and revolutionary ambition is what made the modernist art scene such a hotly contested cultural space. In this view,

The innovations of modernist art are means, not ends, toward the crafting of self-conscious responses to the place of that art or movement in the tradition or traditions of art. As such, a modernist movement is not simply *typified by*, but further, *defines* itself through the stance it adopts toward its own history; whether implicitly . . . or explicitly, any given modernist movement depicts the movements out of which it arose as having posed questions they did not, or more strongly, could not resolve, questions the nature of which is made visible only through the achievements of this, the later, movement. The very identity of a modernist movement is thus essentially historical. (W 9)⁷

It is this history which Danto has in view in his accounting of the emergence of Pop and Minimalism, where for him this mini-history stands for the *entire* self-revolutionizing history of modern art. Now Pop and Minimalism break from this history, and in the manner of their breaking from it, end it. Pop was an assault on the very idea of delimitation and policing, taboo-making; it seems to assert that there are no proper boundaries, no borders; but if there are no significant borders, then it puts to an end the sequence of revolutionizing movements, since in its overturning of the delimitations it inherits it would leave no future revolutionary boundary crossing for art to accomplish.

In a sense, this is where we came in. But it is a fraught and complex moment. Evidently, Danto is treating Pop and Minimalism as symbolic of something; and indeed, for Danto artworks *are* symbols or metaphors (this is what he thinks is the core philosophical notion of art). Metaphors, he says, are minor works of art.⁸ In ordinary judgments, we claim that an object possesses a specific property of a kind that objects of that sort typically possess; in metaphorical attribution, we link to the object properties or qualities that are literally false but invoke a series of indeterminate ideas and associations: "Her hair fell like night in the jungle." For Danto, judgments using signs are normally and ideally transparent in their meaning, while in symbolic and metaphorical discourse (symbols are metaphors for Danto) qualification is rich in associations, so rich that meaning remains indeterminate and therefore opaque. Danto's way of getting to this opacity is by considering how what is originally transparent (a sign) can become opaque (a metaphor or symbol); the transparent meaning of a sign is its "extensional" sense, while the opacity of a symbol is its "intensional" meaning. To say of metaphors or symbols that they are intensional rather than extensional is to say that there can be no full discursive elaboration or precisification of them, or, more technically, they generate contexts in which substitution and quantification are blocked in the same way that intensional contexts typically block substitution and quantification. For example, if Jones is a spy, and if I *believe* I saw Jones in the park this morning,

then it does not follow that I believe that I saw a spy this morning. My “believing” ties my seeing Jones back to the body of my beliefs; in this *closed context*, the sense of “Jones” is determined by my beliefs irrespective of what is in fact, “extensionally,” true. If I believe I saw Jones, and further believe Jones to be a patriot, then I will believe I saw a patriot. Belief, and similar mental attitudes, generate a closed, “intensional” context. In Danto’s view, intensional contexts are best conceived as quotational, the quoting of something that is itself a (transparent) representation. When we say, or quote, what another said, we automatically bracket the truth claim of the original saying: “She said: ‘The cookie is in the cookie jar.’” The quoting of the original statement places its original claim in suspense, no longer a straightforward truth claim: my saying what she said does not commit me to the truth of her statement. On the contrary, in quoting her I am taking her statement as a whole and preparing it for another purpose, for example, as evidence for her pathological interest in cookies. Quoting is the model of doing things with ordinarily transparent signs that brackets or holds in suspense their usual transparent meaning.

Roughly, then, apart from their representational use, literary signs are chosen for other purposes, to do other things, and these other purposes, expressive or formal, are *equivalent* to placing a sentence in quotation marks. The idea of intensionality, on which Danto spends the bulk of the last chapter of *Transfiguration*, is an analytic way of getting at what Heidegger speaks about in terms of concealment and its vehicle, earth.⁹ More simply, for a sign a meaning is external to it, while for a symbol its meaning is internal to it (like the reference back to my beliefs in the case of Jones or the further revelation of cookie mania in the case of the statement about the current location of a cookie). Symbols give presence to their content: “The concept of the symbol I am advancing is almost entirely Hegelian, in that it consists of giving sensuous or material embodiment to what Hegel would certainly have called Idea: it is Idea made flesh” (W 105). But if a symbol makes something present, it can do so only if what is made present, incarnated, is originally absent. But a symbol cannot make fully present what is absent, since otherwise the original absence would be contingent, insignificant. So a symbol both incarnates something absent and points to that absence; in pointing to that absence it necessarily points to its own constitutive inadequacy. Full incarnation—blood becoming wine—is not symbolic but magical. Symbols are disillusioned magical signs.

So initially, Pop looks like a symbol of the history of art leading up to it and a refusal and delegitimation of that history. But it is more than this. For Danto the significance of Pop and Minimalism is philosophical, and the philosophical point is, in virtue of being deretinalizing, antisym-

bolic; that is, the symbolic significance of Pop is that it overcomes the constitutive inadequacy of the artistic symbol by *fully* lending itself to the philosophical purpose of revealing the meaning of art, which meaning again is nothing retinal.¹⁰ Art liberates itself from philosophy, from seeking transcendence outside itself, by becoming philosophy, by becoming the Idea of itself. Or more precisely, Pop fully acknowledges the indiscernibility thesis, insists on it; in so doing it realizes its essence is not visual. At that moment, Danto avers, once art realizes that its sensible art-making cannot uncover the essence, because the essence is nothing visual, then art is freed to hand over the matter to philosophy and itself becomes free from philosophy.¹¹ With Pop, art became one with its own philosophy in that it sensuously realized the limits of sensuous, symbolic presentation for elaborating the meaning of art. Said another way, art symbolically announced the limits of symbolic presentation for stating the meaning of art—the very meaning which the dynamic history of art had been questing after—and hence inscribed within itself the end of its quest, the end of its dynamic history: the meaning of art now belongs to the discursive elaboration of philosophy itself. Even in art and for art, the meaning of art detaches itself from material embodiment (the deretinalization thesis) and becomes a matter of rational-mindedness. This is Danto's Hegelian thesis. Once art becomes one with its own philosophy, then, after Pop, art has no more historical or philosophical secrets to protect. After Pop, after the end of art, art can become posthistorical, wholly absorbed in its moment and innocence, each work defining itself.

While there are deep Hegelian inflections in this story, with the anti-opticality, deretinalization aspect of it converging with Hegel's sense of art being discovered to be really a vehicle of mind, it equally is very anti-Hegelian. For Hegel, art's ending concerned, above all, art as no longer an adequate vehicle for expressing the truth about human existence; art, that is, stopped being *formative* for cultural life as a whole because the meaning of culture as a whole could no longer be adequately expressed in sensuous terms—the truth was spiritual and not sensuous. But this is something quite different from Danto's claim that art becomes posthistorical because *its* meaning, what art is, cannot be presented symbolically—even if being symbolic and opaque is the nature of art. For Hegel, the issue of the end of art concerns art's adequacy in general as a vehicle for expressing the truth about human existence at a time and place; for Danto, the end of art concerns only the achievement of a body of visual works of art that reveal their own inability to characterize their own essential features as opposed to other forms of meaning. By making the stakes of the history of art wholly and simply the question of what distinguishes art meanings from other kinds of meanings Danto suppresses the

cultural role of art, art as a form of absolute spirit—a mode in which a culture comes to self-consciousness about itself with respect to its fundamental aspirations and their current nonsatisfaction. What is puzzling, then, about Danto's account is that the *need for art* plays no role in his account of what art *is* (it is as if the heat of modernism's revolutionary questing had no cultural motivations but was solely an artifact of its cognitive quest—the stakes only ever philosophical). Yet, despite his account's aversion to the problem of need, there is space for detecting ambivalence: his theory seems torn between a denial that there could be such a thing as a culture-wide and so constitutive need for art—which is implied by his posthistorical conception of each work of art autonomously determining its own meaning and significance—and its conception of the work of art as symbol, implying that the transparency of the mind to itself somehow misses out on or represses some feature or aspect of human existence that can only be had, if it can be had at all, in forms of expression that are inherently inadequate, in contexts that include some irremediable opacity. The philosophical transparency of the definition of art appears to stand in direct opposition to what that definition specifies, namely, that art addresses some absence that cannot be made present, and hence cannot be represented (in the manner in which a sign represents). Hence, *Danto's gesture of revealing what art truly is simultaneously makes art's purpose utterly inscrutable; why art?* But is not this just art's complaint about transparent representation, about philosophy: that it makes the yearnings, the suffering and the enjoyment, of the concrete and particular as if nothing in relation to the sweep of universal truth?

Bois's Semiotic Turn

All artworks are writing, not just those that are obviously such;
they are hieroglyphs for which the code has been lost.
—T. W. Adorno

One obvious way in which Danto's account of the unfolding of modernism is inadequate is that it makes the defining purpose of art's quest the purely cognitive one of discovering what art truly is. This seems factually, historically, wrong; if Danto is refining and sublating Clement Greenberg's history of modernism, he seems to have forgotten a singular feature of Greenberg's story, namely that the arts were "*hunted back* to their mediums, and there they have been isolated, concentrated and defined. To restore the identity of an art, the opacity of its medium must be empha-

sized.”¹² That the arts were “hunted back” to their mediums, painting as painting and nothing else, signals that there was an operation of brutal harassment in relation to which recourse to the medium, delimiting the boundaries of painting by hugging to the shoreline of the medium itself, was to be a form of defense; and securing that defense meant securing an opacity against the depredations of rational-mindedness; for this quest for resistance to terminate in conceding all to the philosophical concept would thus be the sign of defeat.

The most immediate threat to painting came from photography: “From today painting is dead,” Paul Delaroche is reported to have said on seeing the results of Daguerre’s invention (*P* 231). What modernist art sought was some way of revealing what gave artworks their *authority* in a context in which photography had already made evident that such authority could not be located in rendering a true likeness to the world. For that purpose photography will always be found superior to art. Hence, in seeking some delimitation of what distinguished it from photography, there was simultaneously operative an extravagant awareness that what was at stake was locating for itself a mode of claiming that would be *resistant* to engulfment by the advance of technology and, to bring in art’s second predator, the allurements of the market where things were suddenly to be prized not for their use value (or moral worth, for that matter) but, well, for their allurements themselves—which in brief is what Marx had in mind with the notion of commodities being fetishes. If the notion of artistic medium was to function as a moment of opacity against rational transparency, what was needed in order to prevent artworks from becoming commodities purely exchangeable against other commodities was a mechanism for putting comparison (and so exchange) out of play. For this purpose, that is, of ensuring that works were utterly unique, each modern work of art had to be *new*. Arguably, it was this search for the new that motored the revolutionary questing of modernism that Danto supposes was primarily a philosophical quest. Walter Benjamin parses Baudelaire’s conception of the new in these words: “This vilification which things suffer by their ability to be taxed as commodities is counterbalanced in Baudelaire’s conception by the inestimable value of novelty. Novelty represents an absolute which can neither be interpreted [as allegory] nor compared [as commodity]. It becomes the ultimate entrenchment of art.”¹³

If photography in this scenario is a stand-in for technology in general, and one supposes that the advance of technology, on the one hand, and the reduction of all items to exchangeable commodities, on the other hand, were threats first of all not to art but to the integrity of bourgeois life, its promise of freedom and happiness (its promise to set life within a self-authorizing whole), then art’s seeking resistance to them was not

merely for the sake of saving its own skin, *but for the sake of modernity itself*. Unless the claim of sensuous particulars themselves could be salvaged from the advance of technology and its rationality, and from the usurpations of the market (where even human labor is a commodity to be sold and bought subject to market mechanisms of supply and demand), then the project of modernity would itself be defeated. Because the claim of art always had been bound up with its sensuous nature, then, by a twist of historical fate, art, in taking up and taking a stand on its difference from everything that was not art, was simultaneously attempting to critique rational modernity for the sake of (another) modernity. This is the culture-wide *need* for art, “the consciousness of plight,” which modernism, inconstantly but continuously, had in its sights, the precise absence which the modernist art symbol, to use Danto’s notion, incarnates. What art aims to incarnate is the necessity of, the unsublatable need for incarnation itself.¹⁴ If artworks are incarnations of ideas, and the aim of art is to incarnate incarnation, to make itself a symbol for the need for symbolic, irreducible material meaning, then art’s becoming reflexive in relation to its medium, its constitutive opacity, is the institutional way in which *we* self-consciously authorize that need and necessity.¹⁵ This makes art philosophical, all right, but its claim can succeed only on the condition that it resist translation into discursive rationality.

I am here already broaching on the territory of Yves-Alain Bois’s “Painting: The Task of Mourning” (in his book *Painting as Model*), which presents an elegant historical account of how modernist art inhabits or projects its end as the reverse side of the mechanisms through which it attempted to avoid delegitimation from without. What Danto sees as the posthistorical flourishing of art, its born-again innocence, Bois perceives as surrender to the market, a surrender which involves art losing its power of being formative for culture as a whole. What Danto celebrates, Bois sees as the repression of the need for art. Pop and its progeny brought about the *de facto* end of art (as expressing culture’s highest need), but have left the *de jure* question hanging. And yet that *de facto* end could not have occurred unless it was prepared for by the very ways in which it was resisted. If I have understood him aright, Bois thinks that modernist art resisted its cultural extinction through internalizing the threats to it, say, by inhabiting that end, even longing for it, but longing for its death in a manner through which it might be finally realized. But this way of holding on, of resisting, is intrinsically melancholic: in internalizing the threat to itself, art survives, lives off, a constant self-beratement.

The most obvious way in which art attempted to defeat photography, the mechanization of beauty, was through a foregrounding of touch, texture, and gesture. By bringing these features of painting to the fore, art

could reveal the absence of the hand, as the metonymic symbol of the human body and so of subjectivity, from industrial products, where the absence of the hand was understood to be a consequence of the tendential displacement and repression of the subject, and so subjectivity itself, in the industrial process. The handedness of modernist representations of the world, in Cézanne, say, mean to reinsert the subject back into the world represented. Bois contends that the attempt to resurrect the claim of subjectivity in this way turns out to be without authority because it is, finally, just an empty flaunting of subjectivity, as if the very fact of handedness could by itself authorize embodied subjectivity by its mere appearance. Handedness on its own cannot but beg the question it is meant to answer—it will always look to be an irrational protest against enlightened rationality. In opposition to the cult of the touch, Bois witnesses the paintings of Robert Ryman, whose painterly effort is to dissect the touch, stroke, gesture, along with the insistence of pictorial raw material, down to their most minimal units. In so doing, Ryman dissolves the relationship between the trace on the canvas and its “organic referent. The body of the artist moves toward the condition of photography: the division of labor is interiorized” (P 231–32). This is not intended as a criticism of Ryman; he is the hero of Bois’s book, “the last modernist painter” (P 225), and “the guardian of the tomb of modernist painting” (P 232). Ryman’s project is through an “excess of reflexivity, to outflank the tautological reflexivity [painting about painting] in which modernism has been locked” (P 224). What Bois admires is not that Ryman actually succeeds in overcoming reflexivity through reflexivity, giving back to painting its lost objectivity and worldliness, but that his failures themselves “produce objects that are increasingly enigmatic and interminable” (P 224–25), where being enigmatic and interminable are construed as the perfected forms of that opacity Greenberg wished for modernism and that Danto claims is constitutive of the art symbol as such. In this context, being enigmatic and interminable are, precisely, symbols of (incarnate) objectivity.¹⁶ I shall return to the question of the enigmatic later in this essay.

Let Ryman stand for the claim of modernism, its achieved state; the strategy of *internalizing industrial rationality in order to defeat it*¹⁷ which became self-conscious with Seurat, reaches its culmination—after a long history of avoidance, “analytic decomposition” (P 233), with Pollock as its foremost representative—with Ryman.¹⁸ This is a dark scenario, since Bois’s defense of art includes its processual capitulation to industrial rationality, which is what his championing of Ryman against Pollock amounts to. On the face of it, this sounds perverse. It is that perversity I am interested in. What brings Bois to this pitch is the view that all the nonindustrial (nonmimetic) strategies of resistance fail, and are shown to fail by

artists themselves: Duchamp, Rodchenko, and Mondrian. What Bois thus wants to explain is the historical trajectory through which modernism achieved its exemplary state, became nothing but Ryman's endlessly deferred collapse into photography: no touch, no hand, just traces of the body asymptotically approaching the state of the machine, with only its failures to do so providing a space of hope.

Since I am here attempting to defend the need for art as modernism's achievement, I want to defend Ryman's achievement as exemplary of modernist claiming; but to do so is to champion Ryman against Bois's account of him. Irrespective of the narrative through which he reaches his contention, Bois's allegiance to Ryman, his binding of himself to Ryman's achievement, is something that he cannot rationally ground because, finally, for Bois, Ryman's achievement really is groundless and *merely* conventional. At the conclusion of his essay on Ryman, Bois says just this: "Ryman also realizes that when the norms of painting are put to the test, *what is arbitrary will have the last word*" (P 226, emphasis mine). By "arbitrary" Bois means the arbitrariness of the sign, where the arbitrariness of the sign is to be understood as the discovery that no signs, including the resemblances on which representational painting relied, have natural referents, that signs only have meaning in the context of other signs, and that the system of signs as a whole is groundless. The advent of the discovery of the arbitrariness of the sign in painting, which oddly plays no role in "Painting: The Task of Mourning," and which Bois affirms as "the principal rupture in this century's art" (P 79), occurs with Picasso's acquisition of a Grebo mask and his making of the papier collé *Guitar*. What Picasso is claimed to have recognized in the African mask, put to work in his papiers collés, and then elaborated in the transformations that mark the movement from analytic to synthetic Cubism, is that the sculptural sign is syntactically, semantically, and materially arbitrary. The mask is syntactically arbitrary in that the arrangement of parts, their articulation of one with another, does not, and need not, track the articulations of the human body itself: knowledge of anatomical order does not determine sculptural order. Nor, semantically, need the parts themselves resemble what they stand for:

A cowry can represent an eye, but a nail can fill the same function. From this second type of arbitrariness unfolds the third (that of materials), as well as the complete range of poetic methods that we might now call metaphoric displacements. A cowry can represent an eye but also a navel or a mouth; therefore, an eye *is* also a mouth or a navel. (P 84–85, emphasis mine)

If the syntactic, semantic, and material terms of an art are all, through and through, arbitrary, then art will have no forms of necessity it can call its own, and hence no authority. All empty. I always sense that while Bois needs Duchamp's readymade for his semiological unmasking, nominalism being the perfect metaphysical adumbration of the arbitrariness of the sign, he secretly despises Duchamp's cynicism and nay-saying, resistance to which appears in his championing of Ryman, Mondrian, and Barnett Newman.¹⁹ Affirming, recounting, Picasso's discovery in the way he does, leaves Bois without any resources for making any sense of either his despising or his allegiances.

You might think of Picasso's discovery this way: the revealing that the sculptural sign is syntactically, semantically, and materially arbitrary is equivalent to the utter deauthorization of nature, and *thus the making* of nature into a dead thing, a corpse, a husk—a mere vehicle for the play of the sign; but that utter deauthorization of nature, because it comes through or entails the conventionality (arbitrariness, contingency) of the sign in general, simultaneously deauthorizes linguistic practice with it. So the disenchantment of art entails the disenchantment of nature, which disenchantments jointly entail the disenchantment of society. But that is not the true order of things, merely the order of discovery; in truth, it is the arbitrariness of the social sign that manages the slaughter all by itself: *the threefold arbitrariness of the sign is precisely its detachment from material determination and even the memory of nature's authority*. The Hegelian temptation is to here urge a halt to arbitrariness on the grounds that, after all, if Hegel is right (if Mondrian is right), then the circulation of the social sign must, ought to, be governed by the norms of equivalence and reciprocity that are the actuality of the demand for recognition. But how will that help? How will those norms fill the need for art against technology and the market with which this telling began? More to the point, since mutual recognition in a sense *begins* from insight into the triple arbitrariness of the sign—that the authority of the sign is nothing representational and that its having meaning and authority is somehow up to us—how is it going to cope with the claim that (knowledge of) the anatomy of the human body is without intrinsic authority?²⁰ So in representing ourselves to ourselves we are simply going to freely, rationally *agree* that my eyes belong in their sockets and my head atop my neck and shoulders?

If that sounds hopelessly wild, too fast, desperate, and above all, crude, it is. But the crudeness of the flat-footed counter is surely just the flip side of the crudeness of the claim for the arbitrariness of the sign, as if its mention might take us anywhere other than to a dead end. What gets left behind in such theoretical unmasking are the particulars themselves,

their being there before us and somehow managing a claim.²¹ Since half of what is at stake here is the status of convention—the haunting anxiety that all conventions are mere conventions (which I take to be the upshot of the claim that arbitrariness has the last word)—let me return to Ryman for a moment. I will need to simplify greatly (I mean simplify the complexity of Ryman's painting, the relation between the product and the process through which it is produced). When Bois claims that Ryman's analytic procedure is to approach the condition of the machine, what he actually has in mind is the fact that within each work, whatever element of painting is being interrogated (brushstroke, texture), his procedure is to set that element into motion through repetition. Ryman surmounts the subjectivity of the touch, gesture, brushstroke through a procedure of indefinite repetition. And while on one level that is making the element subject to mechanical determination, on another level it sets in place a structure through which subjective expression can take on objective form: iteration. A conventional sign cannot be a sign unless it is in principle repeatable; so actual repeating is a way of demonstrating that something is (potentially) a sign. Repetition (or seriality) thus transforms the apparently subjective/organic gesture into a—conventional—potentiality for meaning.²² This is the real reason why the bodily, expressive moment is never fully overcome in Ryman (and why the elements of a Ryman painting can so confidently flag their subjective look). It is not an asymptotic approach to photography that occurs; rather, it is a mobilizing of what I want to call painting's "visionemic" syntax: instead of linguistic phonemes, we have the minimum material units of the tradition of painting and drawing—visual/material phonemes, so to speak, so visionemes, with repetition taking the place of difference as providing for the minimum condition of identity.²³ By never leaving the visionemic level, but pressing forward with the repetition, what emerges is a potentiality for meaning that is never allowed to unequivocally semantically mean. Unlike Newman, where a minimal syntactic gesture, the zip, generates a proto-semantic field, with Ryman we get a writing or sounding that is without a master code: an indecipherable writing.²⁴

But something further occurs with Ryman. If iterability is a necessary condition for the possibility of meaning, then by going on repeating, Ryman produces an opaque context where the full force of the minimum unit as potentiality for meaning unaccountably but emphatically appears. Because repetition does no more than work up the original subjective or unmotivated gesture, then we are bound to say that the *appearance* of (proto-)meaning—the "brilliant, hovering, vibrating, and materially dense" white of *Empire* (P 216), for example—is not fully or utterly arbitrary, not a mere convention. Since human life is conditioned, nothing

can prevent conventions being arbitrary in the final instance.²⁵ The question being pressed here, however, is this: What within Ryman's practice emphatically prohibits arbitrariness from having a determining *first* word? What in Ryman's practice shows that the arbitrariness of the sign having the last word does not entail the emptying of the force of convention as such, as if that final arbitrary word would make naught all that preceded it? What does Ryman's practice do for the restitution of conventional meaning? My answer is that his procedures *exhibit* and thereby make *actual* the limits of meaning as its condition of possibility. If limits really are both limits and conditions of possibility, then limitation must be necessary and actual in the emergence of meaning. The opacity of artworks thus contributes rather than detracts from the manner of works' modes of claiming, and in so doing they transcendently inform what meaning means.

While an element of painting would be utterly meaningless on its own, bald repetition is not something *other* than the element; it is just the element itself, again (and again and again). While adding nothing to the element, repetition gives back to the first a potentiality it lacked in its bare state. In that way, the giving back is giving to the element a potentiality that, from another angle, must be borrowed from the element itself since nothing extra is being added. Repetition is form; it is the minimum of form; *repetition is form bound to the material's own insistence*. In saying this, I am not exactly denying that Ryman's strategy is one of a mimetic adaptation to death. What I am urging is that we construe his achievement from the opposing angle of vision: his performance of repeating, and repeating mechanically, reclaims repetition for conventional meaning *against* mechanism. And in reclaiming repetition, he is authorizing the meaning-potential of the element, the painterly brushstroke, say. In Ryman, the performance of repetition—which is halfway between subjective doing and mechanical procedure—becomes a metaphor for rational form still bound to the materiality of the medium. By deploying nothing but indeterminate element and empty repetition, the opacity of its medium restores the identity of painting as Greenberg urged. Hence, the notion of medium comes to stand for materiality—read: embodied subjectivity—as the necessary opaque condition for meaning.

Again, repetition mobilizes but does not add anything to the indigent element. Analogously, by painting nothing but white canvases, Ryman does not negate Duchamp's disgust that even color is industrial and readymade; white, its neutrality, its cool indifference, neutralizes and deflates Duchamp's negation. Ryman's white can stand for the urgency of color, color as a lost language of nature, through its (chromatic) absence. Ryman's insight is to recognize the indeterminacy or undecidability of repetition between convention and mechanism. Repeating repetition

empties it of its mechanical character so that it can take on that indeterminacy, figure it. Making his paintings white does the same for color: white is indeterminate between color as husk, color emptied of all intrinsic (natural) potentiality for meaning, and an amorphous indeterminacy that projects color as such as a potential for meaning.²⁶ Ryman performs the conditions of painting in the absence of painting, which is to say he performs painting as medium and nothing else. That the performance sometimes issues in those enigmatic wholes, as Bois avers, is the force of the claim, its standing as claim.

The moment of indeterminacy, the indigent elements, the all but mechanical repetition, the neutralizing whiteness, collectively ensure opacity, and in ensuring opacity shield convention from transparency, and hence block comparison and allegory, and thus block the conventions of painting from lapsing into being mere conventions. (How painting means is not up to us, not a pure work of freedom or mutuality or equivalence.) The *force of convention* is derived not from rational-mindedness—that is what renders a convention “mere”—but from its unknownness, its non-transparency, its being shielded from the depredations of rational-mindedness. Which is to say that the force of convention, what halts its utter arbitrariness, is the opacity it borrows from dead nature. This would make Ryman’s paintings symbols of (or metaphors for) materiality. The authority of nature, material meaning writ direct, is gone; but that does not mean that we can finally detach ourselves from that loss, since to do so would be to effectively usurp the claims of embodiment as a condition of mindedness. That each element is *indeterminate* between a potential for meaning and nonmeaning—gesture is indeterminate between subjective expression and private language; repetition is indeterminate between principle of iterability and mechanism; white is indeterminate between all colors and the absence of color—entails that each whole Ryman painting inherits that indeterminacy. The negative (private language, mechanism, absence of color) is the placeholder for dead nature, and hence for the vanquished authority of nature. Because of this opacity and negativity, we cannot ascribe the potentiality of meaning to nature itself. But equally, when visual meaning occurs, it is *utterly bound to this deadness*, so that the emphatic limit of meaning here becomes effective as its condition of possibility. Thus, contrary to Hegel, the “baptism of the spiritual” achieved through repetition is not the sole source of the animation of a work; that animation, and hence authority, is indefinitely and indeterminately borrowed from dead nature.²⁷ What we experience in Ryman’s paintings is that mechanism has not yet swamped subjectivity, and that the claim of subjectivity can remain just so long as freedom’s long good-bye to nature remains unfinished.

Adorno's Blindness

If the artwork assumes the expression of incomprehensibility and in its name destroys its own internal comprehensibility, the traditional hierarchy of comprehension collapses. Its place is taken by reflection on art's enigmatic character.²⁸

—T. W. Adorno

Nothing I have said in defense of Ryman exactly answers Bois's final salvo and lament: what is arbitrary will have the last word. Nor has anything I have said fully answered Duchamp's disgust that even paint is readymade. Nor have I answered Rodchenko's Platonic lament that art is semblance and not real. Nor have I answered the common lament that Mondrian's novel practice has been reduced to fashion. I assume that all these lamentations, when read straight, are melancholic and thus components of art's self-beratement: its internalizing of freedom's despite of art, and thus art's impotent raging against freedom for killing it, being turned against itself. What art cannot finally bear, what it finds intolerable, and what we find intolerable about it, is that it is just art and not world.

Theodor Adorno does not so much deny art's melancholic predicament as reveal it as the constitutive condition of modern art. Melancholia cannot be made into mourning since we are not in a position to mourn the passing of art; its passing has not yet passed away (and short of utopia, which may mean never, cannot pass away—unless of course the world becomes a place beyond caring).²⁹ But recognizing this, a recognition Adorno ascribes to the works of high modernism themselves, transforms self-beratement into a dialectical tension within modernist works: modernist works include a moment within themselves of antiart. The antiart moment of modernist works, the moment that Duchamp and Rodchenko attempt to make complete, enacts art's desire to be world and not art; but only *as art*, as semblance, can art evince that desire, perform it.³⁰ Semblance in Adorno is the appearing of artworks to be wholes, and so to be things in themselves. Since artworks are not things in themselves, not worldly items, and thus not really wholes, this appearing is illusory. Semblance belongs to the substance of the modernist work: harmony and unity, theme and variation, foreground and background, the binding of beginning and end, completeness and self-sufficiency, are all formal mechanisms for making works wholes; the finer the mechanism, the deeper the illusion. Advanced works signal their despair at this fact in a moment of nonsemblance, in a moment of sublime dissonance, in a moment of formlessness, in a moment in which the material (sound, color, line, paint, word, space, movement) breaks free from the forming im-

pulse and displays its incomprehensible deadness.³¹ The corpse in the ghost.³² Nothing is more world than dead nature, the eloquent matter of art suddenly returned to its bald, formless, causally saturated state. This much of Hegel's reminder—"but within is common stone, or wood and canvas . . . idea, uttering itself in speech and letters"—has been absorbed by art itself as a moment within its unfolding. Although not every work we are wont to identify as modernist fully exemplifies this movement of formation and deformation, of being beautiful and sublime at once, this dialectic of form and opacity, Adorno does consider it constitutive of modernist art. Modernist art embraces its incapacity.

If modernist art is the sort of art that "seeks refuge in its own negation, hoping to survive through its death" (*AT* 338), it is nonetheless the processual and structural character of that negation, the exhibition of dead nature in the midst of eloquence, hence the binding of meaning to nonmeaning as the condition of meaning, that distinguishes modernist art from what has sought to succeed it. Or rather, we will only begin to comprehend modernism's embrace of incapacity if the acknowledgment of the corpse within the ghost is logically and causally related to the powers of the ghosting, art's spirit, itself. The dialectical movement between form and formlessness, spirit and matter, must be more than a modest acknowledgment of insufficiency; it must be transcendental: the nonmeaning of dead nature is the bearer of art meaning, where art meaning is itself the bearer of the meaning of meaning. To be sure, the arbitrariness of the sign in the last instance is also a form of nonmeaning, but it is, finally, the nonmeaning of the will, of freedom itself, the nonmeaning that is transmitted to the sign from the will's power of negation, or perhaps the nonmeaning that reverberates onto freedom from the sign's detachment from its object. Whilst the postmodernist would explicate the freedom of the will through the arbitrariness of the sign, the Hegelian would adopt the opposite direction of explanation: since the arbitrariness of will and sign each gives on to its other, they can be conceived as mutually conditioning one another. It is this that explains the direct echo of Hegel's dispatching of art in the postmodern slaughter: both the arbitrariness of the sign and the negativity of the will first impugn and then extinguish the lost authority of nature as a condition of meaning.

The nonmeaning of arbitrariness makes meaning possible in that the contextual conditions of meaning cannot themselves determine meaning fully; if a meaning were not in principle detachable from its realization "here," there could be no realization of it ("this" meaning "here") at all. Generality and iterability (jointly: the same again) depend on this thought. Once disenchanted, the claim of universality can be seen to depend on the detachability of a contextualized meaning from the context

in which it is to be found; but what makes detachment possible is the non-meaning of the (final) arbitrariness of the sign and the negativity of the freedom of the will.³³ Hence the terrible discovery of self-defeating modernity: the universality of technical rationality and commodity production is simultaneously the extirpation of meaning and rationality, the modern rational irrational in itself.³⁴ Modernism responds to this discovery and the crisis it generated by insisting upon an opposing principle: no meaning without context, no context without particulars, no particulars without matter. Inevitably, the notion of matter required here is fraught, but in the same way in which disenchanted universality is fraught (entwining meaning within nonmeaning). If matter were utterly raw, without any form or determinacy of its own, it is unclear how rational meaning might *depend* on it; conversely, if the matter necessary for meaning, as the force enabling context to oppose the decontextualizing force of universality, possessed its own form, it would be a natural meaning. Hence, the matter necessary to halt the ascendance of modern universality into arbitrariness can be neither raw nor formed—it is lost.

Bearing the weight of this predicament orients Adorno's analytic of modernism and his critique of Hegel's aesthetics. So, for example, in the course of his defense of the role of natural beauty in art beauty, Adorno contends that nowhere is the "devastation that idealism sowed" more glaringly evident than in its victims, instancing Johann Peter Hebel. Adorno continues:

Perhaps nowhere else is the desiccation of everything not totally ruled by the subject more apparent, nowhere else is the dark shadow of idealism more obvious, than in aesthetics. If the case of natural beauty were pending, dignity would be found culpable for having raised the human animal above the animal. In the experience of nature, dignity reveals itself as subjective usurpation that degrades what is not subordinate to the subject—the qualities—to mere material and expulses it from art as a totally indeterminate potential, even though art requires it according to its own concept. (AT 62)

If the dignity of the subject is idealistically construed as its distance from animal nature, then natural beauty will be found wanting; and this wanting will be transmitted into art—if freedom is going to discover only itself in works—through the reduction of its material conditions to "indeterminate potentials." This is contrary to art's own concept, its being bound to sensuousness. (Which is to concede that there is a compelling necessity in Hegel's declamation of the end of art.) If color, say, were "mere material," then the limit case of the monochrome with its explosion of possible

meanings would be the norm for art. It is just this that the great modern colorists seek to refute: the claim of Matisse's *The Red Studio* is precisely that its red is not reducible, as are the other elements in the painting, to artistic intention; and hence that the claim of the red, as the normative substance of the painting, instigates an objectivity that is incommensurable with the objectivity enjoined through the practices of drawing, forming, composing. Finding a painterly objectivity that might defeat the will as an arbitrary (subjective) source of meaning through the production of intentionless appearances, images that are not images of anything, is a constant of modernism, where that intentionlessness is secured through what cannot be intended, say "this" color as such. If Rodchenko overstated the case for his monochromes, he nonetheless captured an impulse belonging to the deepest stratum of modernism: the extinguishing of the will in the object, a gesture whose realization has routinely been sought through the binding of work to the shoreline of the medium. (Mondrian's constructivism should be regarded as an opposing technique for achieving the same end.)³⁵ The materiality of the medium is, of course, not the materiality of first nature direct: the red of *The Red Studio* does not, could not mount its claim anywhere else but in the painting. But that is in part Adorno's point: the nature that finds its way into painting, on which painting depends, and which is what is glimpsed in natural beauty ("nature can in a sense only be seen blindly"—AT 69), is a nature that is no longer an object of scientific knowledge or practical labor, which *prima facie* may be assumed to exhaust what nature may be. What else of nature there is, art alone systematically interrogates. Hence, if art depends on this impossible nature for its objectivity, it is equally true that *only in the context of art is nature as appearance salvaged*.

Not too far down this path lies Adorno's most replete linking of art beauty and natural beauty, art beauty as the enlightened and so disenchanted version of natural beauty:

Only what had escaped nature as fate would help nature to its restitution. The more that art is an object thoroughly organized by the subject and divested of the subject's intentions, the more articulately does it speak according to the model of a nonconceptual, nonrigidified significant language; this would perhaps be the same language that is inscribed in what the sentimental age gave the beautiful if threadbare name, "The Book of Nature." (AT 67)

If context is to contribute to meaning and reason, then perhaps it is necessary that some portion of cognition be nondiscursive; and perhaps it is

necessary for the possibility of nondiscursive cognition that meaning adhere to things, have a moment of nondetachability; and perhaps it is necessary in order to think nondetachability that we have in mind the idea of a “nonconceptual, nonrigidified significative language.” Still, all this pushes a step further than is capable of vindication here. But a weaker thought is available, and one which follows directly from the claim that the nature of natural beauty in modernist art is a nature divested of the attributes it possesses as an object of knowledge and a subject of technological forming. As we learned on Kant’s knee, the nature that is made to appear once abstraction from epistemic, utilitarian, and practical ends is carried out is, ideally, one that is purposeful but without purpose, where that characterization carries over into the very idea of what it is to ascribe form to artworks. Although the initial cut of “without purpose” is directed against the anthropomorphism of idealism itself, that matters because those purposes have become ultimate: they succeed the collapse of natural teleology. Hence, the concept of “without purpose” elaborates—as a moment within idealism’s self-understanding of its conditionality and finitude—the collapse of the authority of nature, which is to say, the termination of all natural teleology; but this is to concede that the finitude of human knowing and acting is conditioned by the death of nature’s authority. The apparently modest “without purpose” thus reverberates with the death of natural teleology and, with it, the authority of nature. *Only artworks elaborate the loss of the authority of nature as their condition of possibility; they signal their ultimate “without purpose” through their constitutive incomprehensibility.* I suggested at the outset that we would find the place of dead nature in art in a constitutive moment of opacity, of being enigmatic; the “without purpose” through which nature becomes appearance and art works autonomous is exactly what makes them opaque and enigmatic.

It is not accidental that amidst the quite usual sounding chapter titles (“Natural Beauty,” “Art Beauty,” “Semblance and Expression”), Adorno should have “Enigmaticalness, Truth Content, Metaphysics.” In attempting to elicit the constitutive enigmaticalness of art, Adorno is not, Nietzsche-like, espousing art as the irrational, Dionysian other to formal reason, nor withdrawing from his hyper-cognitive orientation to aesthetics generally:

The enigmaticalness of artworks is less their irrationality than their rationality; the more methodically they are ruled, the more sharply their enigmaticalness is thrown into relief. Through form, artworks gain their resemblance to language, seeming at every point to be just this and only this, and at the same time whatever it is slips away. (AT 120)³⁶

Ryman's repetitions, Mondrian's dialectical formality, Newman's sublime austerity each disillusion traditional practice so that nothing may be hidden, yet the distinctly formal and revealed language of each is precisely what renders their best works compelling and enigmatic at once. The expressly enigmatic character of such hermetic, modernist works (which is the plausible source of the philistine's finding them ridiculous, absurd) amounts to the admission of the enigmaticalness of all art (*AT* 122). Enigmaticalness attaches both to works and hence to art itself; as a consequence, what is required is that enigmaticalness be understood in itself, not dissolved: "The solution to the enigma amounts to giving the reason for its insolubility, which is the gaze artworks direct at the viewer" (*AT* 122).

It is that gaze which Ryman's works direct at the viewer. In the case of the best Ryman's, as with Newman's finest canvases, the incandescent appearing of the work drags with it as its shadow its enigmaticalness. That work that appears to hide nothing, to almost throw off the will to appearance, and to exhibit without modesty or restraint the materials making it possible, dead nature, should be so emphatically enigmatic speaks to what art is and can do, our need for it. In such works spirit "throws itself away" and "ignites on what is opposed to it, on materiality. . . . The rationality of artworks becomes spirit only when it is immersed in its polar opposite" (*AT* 118).

Notes

1. Abbreviations used in this essay are as follows: *ILA*: G. W. F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993); *W*: Arthur C. Danto, *The Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste* (Amsterdam: G&B Arts International, 1998); *P*: Yves-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993); *AT*: T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

2. The two pieces I know of that best capture this thesis are Gregg M. Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), chapter 3; "Art as the Tomb of the Past: The Afterlife of Normativity in Hegel"; and Robert B. Pippin, "What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)," which is included in the present volume. Horowitz reads Hegel against the grain by underlining art's *remaining* a thing of the past, that is, as standing for an authority of nature whose being past we can never quite get over. Something of that emphasis reverberates in this essay. For a defense of Hegel against the claims of, in particular, Clement Greenberg's conception of modernist painting, see Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel and the Art of Painting," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. William Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 61–82.

3. In the introduction to *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), I argue that this is the gov-

erning and revolutionary thesis of Lessing's *Laocoön*, which is included in that volume. When Hegel discusses how flesh color should appear in painting, he sounds almost as if he is paraphrasing Lessing's notion of the pregnant moment: "For this inwardness and the subjective side of life should not appear on a surface as laid on, as material colour in strokes and points etc., but as itself a living whole—transparent, profound, like the blue of the sky which should not be in our eyes a resistant surface, but something in which we must be able to immerse ourselves" (G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1975], 2:847).

4. Lessing's one hesitation over seeing art as an expression of freedom turns on precisely the issue of animation.

5. For this, see Kathleen Dow Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

6. Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1–3.

7. This is not Danto, but Gregg Horowitz and Tom Huhn in their superb introduction to *The Wake of Art*. Their account is the best overall appreciation of Danto available. My account here is indebted to their patient reconstruction and critique.

8. Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 189.

9. Lack of space has made it impossible for me to include an account of Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" in these pages. Heidegger mobilizes the problem of freedom and nature, their conflicting claims to authority, in terms of the battle, agon, of world and earth, where earth is a principle of opacity, and a figure of nature as a potentiality for meaningfulness. The claim of earth contests rational transparency. My worry about Heidegger's handling of it is that he presumes access to the earth-world structure independently of the achievements of modernist art in which, I am claiming, the whole issue of freedom breaking from nature is given its most elaborated articulation. See my *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), chapter 2.

10. Danto's own art criticism shows that he does not truly believe that the Pop symbol fully lends itself to philosophical purposes—consider Warhol's disaster pictures; this is the wedge that Horowitz and Huhn deploy against the theory. Hence, there is a lingering absence and opacity even in the Pop symbol.

11. Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 36.

12. Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Francina (London: Harper and Row, 1985), 42 (emphasis mine).

13. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). The interpolations in the passage are Bois's; P235.

14. I am not here claiming that the rational-mindedness of Hegelian spirit and the rational-mindedness of technology and commodification are the same. For Hegel, the rational-mindedness of technology and commodification belong to the reign of the understanding, *Verstand*, scientific reason, which he always re-

garded as necessarily falling short of the demands for rational self-determination. However, it is in the light of technology and commodification that *the emphatic need for incarnation becomes salient*; hence, in supposing that the need for art can be sublated, Hegelian thought, ambiguously still, converges with the reductive forms of rational-mindedness it meant to displace. Said another way, Hegelianism cannot sustain its critique of the mechanical, reductive rationality of *Verstand* without withdrawing from its end of art thesis. This would be one reason why someone like Adorno could consider his defense of art authentically Hegelian, true to the demands of Hegelian thought while critical of the letter of Hegel's writing. This necessity for a post-Hegelian Hegelian defense of art is what I was pointing to as the "ambiguity" of Hegel's own doctrine; this thought will govern the concluding argument of this essay. Stephen Houlgate is to be thanked for pressing on me the need for clarification here.

15. One might suppose that the most contestable aspect of this thesis is the way it connects the manner in which artworks secure authority for themselves with the culture-wide need for art. How might one vindicate the thesis that art's plight is society's plight? Does not modernism's excessive questing *overdramatize* the plight of modernity? Certainly, that objection is the one heard most often in response to the line of argument being pursued here. The direct answer to this objection is that modernism's obsessive questing, the precise manner of that questing, must be considered to be directly proportional to the force deauthorizing the claims of sensuous particularity as such. Hence, it is the manner in which artworks are hunted back to their medium that both reveals the need for sensuous particularity as such and the opposing force evacuating the authority of that need. In this way, the drama of modernism is a normative (transcendental?) sociology of modernity. But as Gillian Rose in *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Athlone, 1981) forcefully pointed out, this is Hegel's way of thinking about art and society: "Hegel inquires into the possibility of art-forms. He asks which forms of art and which individual arts are possible under specific historical and social preconditions. This enquiry is transcendental because it assumes actual art-forms and individual arts as given and examines their possibility. The enquiry is sociological because it connects social structure (precondition) to art-forms (the conditioned)" (122). The difference with modernism is that, lacking the comfort of a stable retrospective point of view, we illuminate the precondition through the manner in which the conditioned historically attempts to secure an art form appropriate to its context.

16. Ryman means to mourn modernism, but knows that such mourning requires an endless working through; because the working through is endless, asymptotically approaching the condition of the photograph without arriving there (Bois, *P232*), it has the form of melancholia.

17. "New art is as abstract as social relations have in truth become. In like manner, the concepts of the realistic and the symbolic are put out of service. Because the spell of external reality over its subjects and their reactions has become absolute, the artwork can only oppose this spell by assimilating itself to it" (Adorno, *AT31*).

18. For convenience, I am here simply conceding this claim to Bois, but it is far from obvious. He thinks the authority of touch, handedness, dissolved because

as it reached its limit in Pollock it finally, fatefully, converged with the analytic of touch, the interiorization of the machine, enacted by Ryman. But since Ryman never in fact fully achieves the interiorization, then the original claim against touch cannot be a contesting of its authority—the authority of the paintings licensed through it—but must rather be something like its weakness as a defense. But that seems to burden the claim of touch with its impotence, as if it is its fault that capital and technology were stronger. Sometimes I hear Bois as being unwilling to forgive the modernism of touch for not being sufficient, as if it were its own fault that its promise was broken. It is that, I think, which leads him to prize Ryman in the way he does: Ryman's method of failure, however delicate and balanced, can go on and on indefinitely, his mimesis of the dead the perfect answer to it. I shall contest this reading of Ryman later.

19. I guess I think Bois *logically* must despise Duchamp since the readymade is, literally, the readymade, that is, unworked, bringing art to its end; hence Duchamp is a manic mourner, a melancholic. Nothing so signifies the melancholic self-beratement of art, the internalizing of the dead thing, as the readymade. I take this to be a definition of the readymade.

20. The critique of representational meaning, of epistemology as first philosophy, is the determining gesture of the transition from "Consciousness" (sense-certainty, perception, and understanding) to self-consciousness (the master-slave dialectic) in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

21. I am not suggesting that the only possible source of critical resistance to the doctrine of the arbitrariness of the sign are exemplary aesthetic particulars; only that, at least here, that exemplarity is already at issue and has been left unaccounted for. For openers, strong semiotic theories like Bois's abstract from context, including the life context, the form of life, in which signs are used.

22. One reason why I speak of potentiality for meaning here is that repeatability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for sign-meaning. The second reason will follow forthwith.

23. If an element can be repeated, then it is at least different from itself; so repetition is a mechanism of displaying identity through difference. Because, in fact, Ryman's elements are those of the tradition of painting and drawing, the austere conditions of phonemic differentiation are not necessary for his visionemes. The point of the repetition is to show *that* the elements are visionemes. I am using the notion of visioneme, in analogy with phoneme, rather than syntax or grammar, for the evident reason that the former but not the latter presupposes the kind of *material* (visual, aural) articulated.

24. If one thinks of the elements of painting as composing what Julia Kristeva calls "the semiotic," namely, those presymbolic material pulsions that are indeterminate between sheer material things and psychological events, then painterly repetition confers on its semiotic elements (the semiotic material of visual perception) a symbolic form, a chance for becoming meaning or a chance for meaning to arise through them, that everyday life has withdrawn from them or defaulted upon providing for them. For this way of construing Kristeva's theory I am indebted to Sara Beardsworth's study *Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004).

25. This much, we might agree, is the force of Kant's Copernican turn—that the limits of knowledge are its conditions of possibility—that Hegel's idealism finally actualizes. Crudely, because Hegel thinks that conditionedness derives from the *ongoing* social determination of meaning, then the ultimate conditioning of knowing and meaning is history. But this way of conceiving of the absolute conditionedness of knowing turns out to be a limitless limit, the condition unable to make limitation visible and thereby socially actual. Despite itself, the only real limit Hegelian sociality encounters is the ultimate, final, arbitrariness of the sign. Which is the complaint that painting, acting in the name of embodied subjectivity, raises against Hegelian history and the claim of rational-mindedness. In this setting, painting's opacity stands for the limits of knowledge, hence for the conditionedness of the human in general. On my reading, modernist painting aims to salvage the Hegelian infinite, the internalizing of the limits of knowing as proper to knowing, against Hegel's own construal.

My claim that the arbitrariness of the sign can always have the last word is meant to acknowledge that there is no "certain" or "foundational" answer to the force of arbitrariness and skeptical negativity. The problem with the semiotic analysis of Picasso, which may or may not echo Picasso's own skeptical doubts about art, his disenchantment with painting, is that it perceives that skeptical force as infecting the body of meaning from the outset, always already, so to speak, so that there never is meaning but only the illusion of meaning. Logically, the problem arises, again, because nothing is going to show that a conventional structure of meaning is not arbitrary; and that damages rational confidence, since once we actually discover a rational practice to be, finally, groundless, our capacity to operate with it collapses. Rationality cannot bear too much brightness. But this whole syndrome of arbitrariness and skepticism derives from a repudiation of the finitude of meaning (reason and knowing). The fact that meaning cannot bear up under indefinite critical scrutiny does not entail that it was all along naught, but rather that it was all along finite, transient, vulnerable, mortal, and that those features of meaning are what make it possible. It is this, in part, which modernist works exhibit—and why such works are so antithetical to the ideals of classicism.

26. Adorno has anticipated this argument: "But the artwork must absorb even its most fatal enemy—fungibility; rather than fleeing into concretion, the artwork must present through its own concretion the total nexus of abstraction and thereby resist it. Repetition in authentic new artworks is not always an accommodation to the archaic compulsion toward repetition. Many artworks indite this compulsion and thereby take the part of what . . . has been called the unrepeatable; Beckett's *Play*, with the spurious infinity of its reprise, presents the most accomplished example. The black and grey of recent art, its asceticism against color, is the negative apotheosis of color" (Adorno, *AT* 135).

27. My pacing out of the logic of Ryman's practice in this paragraph should ideally collapse the distance between his achievement and Pollock's.

28. Adorno, *AT* 347. I presume the "hierarchy of comprehension" is meant to refer to Plato's divided line and its successors: ascent from sensuous particulars and to intelligible-only universals.

29. I am not denying here that the world can become a place beyond caring, or that such a world is tendentially operating in the society of the simulacrum.

30. The model for this breaking free of semblance in the midst of semblance in Adorno is derived from the "late" works of traditional bourgeois artists, above all Beethoven.

31. In Ryman's works dissonance is transmitted from part to whole: the interlacing of empty element and dumb repetition together being formless (opaque) form.

32. I take Pollock to be the best instance of this logic. Because his work so remarkably performs and inhabits the dialectical tension between semblance (the optical beauty of Pollock) and dissonance (the display of raw materiality) without, in his best works, trying to resolve it, there is reason to resist Bois's championing of Ryman and Mondrian over Pollock. If I were to attempt to draw Ryman and Mondrian into this circle, then I would need to claim that what they mean to achieve is a state in which *a whole work* in its very appearing to the eyes is both semblance and dissonance, the appearing to the eye never settling into a comforting completeness but vibrating, formless in its nonetheless purified and dry formality. This captures something of what Bois wants to say about *Empire* and, however differently, *New York City*.

33. This way of explicating universality is Hegelian. It turns on the idea that the minimum necessary condition for nonnatural meaning is the negation of the immediate; if every form of universality commences with the negation of the given in its immediacy, the negation, or what is the same, the arbitrariness of the fit between the given and its sign, then universality stems from negation and arbitrariness: detachability. Rational universality is not reducible to detachability, but it is conditioned by it, otherwise all universality (reason and judgment) would be reducible to an algorithm. Said naturalistically, the thought is that universality refers to the capacity of the human to engage a context in terms that potentially transcend that context. Coming to see the role of arbitrariness and negation in universality is the disenchanting of it, removing it from its Platonic heaven or a priori shelter and bringing it into natural history.

34. Technical rationality and commodity production are irrational because they repudiate their own conditions of possibility; but that repudiation only matters because the universality of formal reason is not intrinsically rational.

35. It is also to concede that there is something authentic in Minimalism; what is inauthentic is the disavowal of semblance.

36. What Hullot-Kentnor translates as "enigmaticalness" is *Rätselcharakter*, "riddle-character." For while Adorno wants to underline the darkness and incomprehensibility of works, the association he wants to avoid at all costs is mysteriousness, hence anything smacking of the mystical or transcendent. A riddle does not have those associations. On the other hand, he does want that riddling to relate to the purpose(s) of art in general, and above all the loss of transcendent purpose. "Enigmaticalness" perhaps captures those ideas better than would "riddle-character."

What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)

Robert B. Pippin

1

The emergence of abstract art, first in the early part of the twentieth century with Kandinsky, Malevich, and Mondrian, and then in the much more celebrated case of America in the 1950s (Rothko, Pollock, et al.), remains puzzling. Such a great shift in aesthetic standards and taste is unprecedented in its radicality. The fact that nonfigurative art, without identifiable content in any traditional sense, was produced, appreciated, eagerly bought, and even, finally, triumphantly hung in the lobbies of banks and insurance companies, provokes understandable questions about both social and cultural history, as well as about the history of art. The endlessly disputed category of modernism itself and its eventual fate seems at issue.

Whatever else is going on in abstraction as a movement in painting, it is uncontroversial that an accelerating and intensifying self-consciousness about what it is to paint, how painting or visual meaning itself is possible, a transformation of painting itself into the object of painting (issues already in play since Impressionism), are at issue. Given this heightened conceptual dimension, one might turn for some perspective on such developments to that theorist for whom “the historical development of self-consciousness” amounts to the grand narrative of history itself. Even if for many Hegel is, together with Locke, *the* bourgeois philosopher (the philosopher of the *arrière-garde*), he is also the art theorist for whom the link between modernity and an intensifying self-consciousness—both within art production and, philosophically, about art itself—is the most important. And the fairly natural idea of abstraction as a kind of logical culmination of modernist self-consciousness itself, that way of accounting for the phenomenon, is the kind of idea that we owe to Hegel. More broadly, the very existence of abstract art seems to represent some kind of deliberate departure from the entire tradition of image-based art, and so involves some

sort of implicit claim that the conditions of the very intelligibility of what Hegel calls the “highest” philosophical issues have changed, such that traditional, image-based art is no longer as important a vehicle of meaning for us now, given how we have come to understand ourselves, have come to understand understanding. And Hegel was the only prominent modern philosopher who in some way gave voice to that departure, who argued—at the time, outrageously—that traditional art had become “a thing of the past” and that it no longer served “the highest needs of human spirit.” (That is, it still served many extremely important human needs, it was hardly “over” or finished, but it had declined in importance, could not represent “the highest” or most important self-understanding.)

Of course, all these ideas—that a form of art could be in some sense historically required by some sort of conceptual dissonance in a prior form, that a historical form of self-understanding could be called progressive, an advance over an earlier stage, that various activities of “spirit,” art, politics, religion, could be accounted for as linked efforts in a common project (the achievement of self-knowledge and therewith the “realization of freedom”), and so on—are now likely to seem naive, vestigial, of mere historical interest. But the justifiability of this reaction depends a great deal, as in all such cases, on how such Hegelian claims are understood. For example, it is no part at all of any of the standard interpretations of Hegel’s theory that, by closing this particular door on the philosophical significance of traditional art, he could be understood to have thereby opened a door to, to have begun to conceptualize the necessity of, non-image-based art. And, given when Hegel died, it is obviously no part of his own self-understanding. But there is nevertheless a basis in his philosophical history of art for theorizing these later modern developments. Or so I want to argue.

2

Consider the most obvious relevance: the general trajectory of Hegel’s account. The history of art for Hegel represents a kind of gradual dematerialization or developing spiritualization of all forms of self-understanding. Put in the terms of our topic, the basic narrative direction in Hegel’s history of art is toward what could be called something like greater “abstraction” in the means of representation—“from” architecture and sculpture, “toward” painting, music, and finally poetry. “Abstraction” is not the word he would use (he would insist on greater “concreteness” in such a progression), but his stress on less reliance on “representation” and on greater

reflexivity are consistent with the colloquial sense of that term. (The putative inadequacy of “representational” notions of intelligibility is of course tied to very large themes in Hegel’s account of the famous “subject-object” relation. In general, he wants to deny that such intelligibility requires that subjects be both cut off from and connected with the objects of understanding by some mediating medium, by means of which we are directed to some intentional object, a general picture of the mind-world relation which also generates unsolvable skeptical problems. In the Hegelian account of modernism, the question becomes something like what, say, painting looks like, how it presents a notion of intelligibility, without reliance on such a representational model.) So, within the narrative of developing self-consciousness presented by Hegel, not only would it not be surprising to hear that at some point in its history, art might come more and more to be about “abstract” or conceptual objects, like “paintingness” or some such, but we might also hope to find some explanation of why the development of art might have brought us to this point. There will be much that remains surprising, especially the dialectical claim that with such a topic the capacities of art itself would be exhausted, would no longer be adequate to its own object, but the cluster of topics raised by the question of the meaning of abstraction naturally invites an extension of Hegel’s narrative.¹

Sketching this trajectory already indicates what would be the philosophical significance of this development for Hegel: that human beings require, less and less, sensible, representative imagery in order to understand themselves (with respect to “the highest issue”—for Hegel, their being free subjects), that such a natural embodiment is less and less (on its own, considered just in itself) an adequate expression of such a genuinely free life; especially since the essential component of such a free life is an adequate self-understanding.

It is within this narrative that we hear the final, famous Hegelian verdict that artistic expression in Western modernity, tied as it ever was to a sensible and “representative” medium, could no longer bear a major burden of the work in the human struggle toward self-understanding, was no longer as world historically important as it once was, no longer as necessary as it once was to the realization of freedom. (Hegel’s claim is thus not about the end of art, however much he is associated with that phrase, but the end of a way of art’s mattering, something he thinks he can show by presenting a kind of history and logic and phenomenology of anything “mattering” to human beings, within which art plays a distinct and changing role.² Said another way, the prior question for Hegel is always the human need for art.³ Again, the claim is not that there will not be art, or that it won’t matter at all, but that art can no longer play the social role it

did in Greece and Rome, in medieval and Renaissance Christianity, or in Romantic aspirations for the role of art in liberation and *Bildung*. Each of these historical *worlds* has come to a kind of end, and, or so the claim is, there is no equivalently powerful role in bourgeois modernity. (In a way, what could be more obvious?) Accordingly, if Hegel's account is roughly correct, art must either accept such a (comparatively) diminished, subsidiary role (whatever that would mean), or somehow take account of its new status by assuming some new stance, perhaps "about" its own altered status, or perhaps by being about, exclusively and purely, its formal properties and potentials, perhaps by being about opticality as such, or perhaps about purely painterly experiments as the final assertion of the complete autonomy of art, or perhaps by still announcing some form of divine revelation after the death of God, a revelation, but without content and indifferent to audience (as perhaps in the work of Rothko).⁴ It could then matter in all these different ways that there be art, a way not like its prior roles and one more consistent with the situation of European modernity, but a way not imagined by the historical Hegel, even though some such altered stance might be said to have been anticipated in his theory.

3

It is certainly true that Hegel seems to have had some presentiment of the great changes that were to come in post-Romantic art, and to have appreciated the significance of those changes, to have realized that they amounted to much more than a change in artistic fashion. Contemporary artists, Hegel says, "after the necessary particular stages of the romantic art-form have been traversed," have liberated themselves from subject matter, from any nonaesthetically prescribed determinate content.

Bondage to a particular subject-matter and a mode of portrayal suitable for this material alone, are for artists today something past, and art therefore has become a free instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to any material of whatever kind. The artist thus stands above consecrated forms and configurations and moves freely on his own account [*frei für sich*], independent of the subject-matter and mode of conception in which the holy and eternal was previously made visible to human apprehension. . . . From the very beginning, before he embarks on production, his great and free soul must know and possess its own ground, must be sure of itself and confident in itself. (A 1:605–6)⁵

Admittedly, again, the historical Hegel would never have imagined the extent of the “freedom” claimed by modernists and would no doubt have been horrified by abstract art. He was a pretty conservative fellow. But the principle articulated in this quotation, as well as the link to freedom as the decisive issue, are what is important for our purposes. And Hegel seemed to have foreseen the shift in the modernist understanding of artistic experience, away from the sensuous and beautiful and toward the conceptual and reflexive.

The *philosophy* of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art itself yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration [*denkende Betrachtung*], and that, not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is. (A 1:11)

Art (like the modern social world itself) has thus “become philosophical,” invites more of a philosophical than a purely aesthetic response, and so, for that reason, could be said now to be superseded in world historical terms by philosophy itself, by the very philosophy it itself calls for.

This is certainly a distinctive, bold candidate among other more familiar explanations. It competes with what can loosely be called the Marxist claim about the dissolving coherence of late bourgeois culture reflected in the self-images expressed in such art, or the neo-Marxist claim about the active “negation” of that culture by an art produced so that it could not be assimilated, consumed (or even understood) within it. (A link between modernism in the arts and resistance to the cultural logic of capitalism—not just expressive of it and its failure to make sense—is also characteristic of the sophisticated new account by T. J. Clark.)⁶ It competes as well with more so-called essentialist or reductionist accounts, like Clement Greenberg’s: how painting, threatened with absorption by the mass culture and entertainment industries, retreated (or advanced, depending on your point of view) to the “essence” of painting as such, flatness and the composition of flat surface, an insistence on art’s purity and autonomy as a way of resisting such absorption or colonization by other, especially narrative, art forms. And there is Michael Fried’s compelling emphasis on the attempt by modernists to continue to make *great* art, art that did not at all reject or refuse its tradition, and aspired to be an art that could stand together with the great art of the past. Such art had to be produced under such radically different historical conditions as to make this most unlikely, especially conditions of intense, expanding, and deepening self-consciousness about the painting itself both as artificial object beheld and as directing the beholder to the painting’s intentional object.

Given such self-consciousness, painters had to respond by creating a different sort of painterly presence, and by solving in ever more complicated ways what Fried has called the problem of the painting's "theatricality." Hegel's account of our growing awareness of the limitations of a traditionally representationalist notion of intelligibility (for the expression of "the highest things"), and the consequences of this development for the status of visual art in our culture (its way of mattering), is a bold entrant in such a sweepstakes. The core of that case is Hegel's argument for the explanatory priority of the notion of spirit, *Geist*, a collective subjectivity, and its development; that such notions amount to a more comprehensive and fundamental *explicans* in accounting for conceptual, political, and aesthetic change than appeals to "capitalism," "negation," the "essence" of painting, and so forth. This in turn obviously commits him to showing just how such an appeal to spirit's self-alienation, externalization, and eventual reconciliation does in fact account for fundamental shifts in aesthetic values, especially in what is for Hegel its end game, its "culmination" as art itself.

There are of course hundreds of elements in such claims that specialists and philosophers will want to attack. There are no grander grand narratives than Hegelian ones, and his have been put to such strange and implausible uses that one might be advised to stay well clear of any claim about abstraction (understood as a turn to reflexive self-understanding as its own object) as the culmination or completion or exhaustion of the Western art tradition.⁷ But there must be *something* of some generality and scope that we can say about the historical experience of the inadequacy of traditional representational art, just then and just there (that is, at the forefront of European modernization), and whatever there is to say, it is unlikely we will get a handle on it without understanding the relation between this momentous, epochal shift in art history and the history of modernity itself, as well as corresponding changes in religious, institutional, and sociopolitical life.

So *why* then did traditional, representational art come to be experienced as inadequate, a kind of historical relic rather than a living presence? To understand Hegel's (or "the Hegelian") answer to this question, we also face right away the difficult question of gaining any adequate access to the 1,200 pages of lecture notes organized by his student H. G. Hotho in what we now know as the standard edition of Hegel's lectures.⁸ But we can start reconstructing a Hegelian reaction to abstractionism by noting several peculiarities of Hegel's aesthetic theory. I note four such distinct peculiarities because, I will try to show, they are the most important in understanding a comprehensive Hegelian view (or possible view) on the issue of abstractionism.

4

The first and most peculiar is how Hegel ties art ubiquitously, in all cases, to *the divine*. In a way that greatly complicates his use of the term, Hegel does not confine that issue solely to explicitly religious art of the classical Greek, Roman, medieval, Renaissance, and early modern periods. All art, no matter the subject matter, from still life to portrait to landscape to historical scene, is understood as an attempt “to portray the divine.” This ought right away to alert us that this sweeping reference is, to say the least, nonstandard and will require considerable interpretation. Art is called “one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of spirit [*Geist*]” (A 1:7). This set of appositives appears to gloss the divine *as* “the deepest interests of mankind and the most comprehensive truths of spirit” rather than vice versa, and this quite radical humanism (or divinization of the human) is prominent elsewhere in the lectures too. The divine is often treated as if its relevant synonyms were *das Wahre* and *das Wahrhaftige*, the “true” or the “real truth,” and art is regularly treated as the attempt by spirit to externalize its self-understanding in a sensible form, and thereby to appropriate such externality as its own, to be at home therein, and to express more successfully such a self-understanding. (And all of *that* is called an expression of the divinity in man. As Hegel is wont to put it, this is the truth that the Christian religion tries to express in its “representation” of a father-god externalized in his son.) Art, in other words, is treated as a vehicle for the self-education of human being about itself, ultimately about what it means to be a free, self-determining being, and when Hegel calls *that* dimension of aesthetic meaning divine, he seems to be rather flattering the seriousness and finality of the enterprise (its independence from sensual need, utilitarian interest, and so on; its “absolute” importance) than in any sense worrying about the God of revealed religion. Another way to put Hegel’s quite heretical view would be to say that for Hegel artistic activity is not about representing divinity, but *expressing* divinity and even *becoming* divine. “God,” he says, “is more honored by what spirit makes than by the productions and formations of nature,” and this because “there is something divine in man, but it is active in him in a form appropriate to the being of God in a totally different and higher manner than it is in nature” (A 1:30).⁹ (This is all the basis of Hegel’s fantastic, extravagant claim that in effect *religion* is an inadequate vehicle of the divine.)¹⁰

5

Likewise, second, Hegel is one of the very few philosophers or writers or artists of this period—I would guess the only one—for whom *the beauty of nature was of no significance whatsoever*. Nature's status as an *ens creatum*, as a reflection of God, or natural beauty as an indication of purposiveness, are of no importance to him, and he expresses this while evincing no Gnostic antipathy to nature itself as fallen or evil. Nature is simply "spiritless," *geistlos*; or without meaning, even boring. (Hegel goes so far as to claim that a landscape painting is the proper object of human attention and speculative contemplation, not a natural landscape itself [A 1:29], or, in a near-Kafkaesque claim, that a portrait of a person can be more like the individual than the actual individual himself [A 2:866–67].)¹¹ When a natural object or event is portrayed aesthetically it acquires a distinct sort of meaning, what it is within and for a human community, that it would not have had just as such an object itself. (Hegel is, after all, an idealist of sorts, and we shall return to this reflexivity or doubled meaning of art objects later in this essay.) The object becomes suffused for the first time with a human meaning.¹² In a memorable passage, Hegel notes that it is as if an artistic treatment transforms every visible surface into an eye, the visible seat of the soul's meaning, such that in looking at such painted surfaces—looking at, he says, "the thousand-eyed Argos"—we search for what we search for in looking into another human's eye. It is crucial to note that Hegel describes looking at art objects this way, as if each one had eyes (which, whatever it means, does not mean we are looking *through* the image to a source or original; a human soul is not literally visible inside the eye). Nor are we looking at art objects the way subjects look at objects. That would be like looking at *persons* that way, and suggests a different sort of link between art and morality than what Kant wanted to suggest (A 1:153).¹³ And this is all also part of Hegel's case that painting is the first "romantic art" (in his hierarchy of art), and therewith first on the way to an adequate expression of human freedom. This is so because, for example, in a painting the object "does not remain an actual spatial natural existent, but becomes a reflection [*Widerschein*] of spirit." The "real" is thus said to be "cancelled" and transformed into something "in the domain of spirit for the apprehension by spirit"—which natural objects are not (A 2:805).¹⁴

This touches on an important point that *is* part of the traditional Hegel reading: that Hegel played a very large role in shifting aesthetic appreciation from one founded on taste, beauty, and pleasure to one concerned with criticism, with meaning, and with a kind of self-education.

But the point here about the importance of Hegel's indifference to nature and beauty introduces a more radical one.¹⁵ In fact, fine art, and especially its history, Hegel claims, should be understood as a *liberation from nature*; not a rejection of its (or our) inherent inadequacy, but the achievement of a mode of self-understanding and self-determination no longer set or limited by nature as such, as well as a humanizing transformation of the natural into a human world. (Art is said to enable a "free subject" to "strip the external world of its inflexible foreignness and to enjoy in the shape of things only an external realization of himself" [A 1:31].)¹⁶ Hegel starts out from a premise in which art is treated cognitively, as a way of becoming more self-conscious about aspects of intelligibility, meaning, and about the activity of meaning-making itself, and so is said to be *the sensible shining or appearing of the Idea*, where "the Idea" is that comprehensive, sought-after self-conscious understanding of "rendering intelligible." And it is *this* function that is treated as partaking of a kind of divinity. ("The universal need for art, that is to say, is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self" [A 1:31].) From there he proceeds to a conclusion that runs so counter to contemporaries like Kant, Schiller, and Schelling: that art "liberates man . . . *from the power of sensuousness*" and art "lifts [man] with its gentle hands [*mit milden Händen*] out of and above imprisonment in nature" (A 1:49).

In what we now characterize as the Romantic dimension of post-Kantianism, most visible in Schiller, the significance of beauty and art, its mattering as it does, was an expression and experience of an original harmony between our corporeality or natural fate and our agency, spontaneity, and freedom, a harmony partially lost in the assertion of modern autonomy or self-rule, but that could be recovered in the "play" of the imagination's spontaneity "at work" in, not on, the sensuous immediacy of perception and delight. Hegel's formulation indicates that if there is to be such a reconciliation it must be achieved rather than recovered, and that part of that process will be an active negation in some way of the "power" of sensuousness and "imprisonment" in nature (not, it should be stressed, "nature" as such). Nature will not be lost or rendered a mere object in this process (which is, after all, a "gentle" process), but transformed, remade into a "second nature."¹⁷ A standard example of such a transformation is Hegel's account of the habits of mind and unreflective practices of "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*), and another might be, I am suggesting, the achievement of those habits of mind, sorts of lived embodiment, for which modernism in the arts becomes timely, appropriate.

Admittedly, this is a difficult position to understand. Hegel is nei-

ther appealing to some subjective act of “investing” the natural world with an imposed, human/divine meaning, nor is he ascribing to aesthetic experience a religious function, as of a revelation of divine purposiveness in the natural world. And the putative inadequacies of representational meaning and of natural embodiment in art are not introduced in order to suggest a rejection of all representation, nor to introduce some possible transcendence of natural embodiment. As noted before, the “inadequacy” issue concerns only the issue of “the highest” matters of human importance, and Hegelian transcendence (or *Aufhebung*) is always also a preservation and recollecting, even if with an altered sense of such “matterings.” Without a fuller account than is possible here of such a “highest” self-understanding and the place and status of nature in such an accomplishment, not to mention Hegel’s final take on the mind-world issue, his position on the “limitations” of traditional fine art cannot be adequately understood, but we shall have to make do here with such a provisional account.

Likewise in Hegel’s account, this development is not a result of a growing realization of the inadequacy of the iconic relation to a transcendent God, as Alain Besançon has recently claimed.¹⁸ What Hegel describes is a much more practical struggle with the natural world, such that the achievement of various forms of real independence from natural determination is reflected in the self-images manifested in art. There is, in other words, no negative theology in Hegel’s strange humanistic theology. His progressivism is everywhere decisive; we have *broken* free of a fundamental dependence on such sensible images not so much because of *their* inadequacy as because of *our* having made ourselves independent of them, and art must be understood as part and parcel of that work. (Again, none of this means that we become, or realize we always were, supernatural beings, or that we can now ignore our corporeality. We remain finite; constrained in all the obvious ways by natural limitations. But the experience of, the very meaning of, such naturality is now to be regarded as a human achievement, in the way that the natural desire to reproduce has become inseparable from romantic values and the norms of familial and social existence; or inseparable from egoistic or hedonistic or any other such value. The unavailability of mere nature, as such, within experience, is the point at issue.) As Hegel puts it in a famous passage,

No matter how excellent we find the statues of Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is of no help; we bend our knee no longer [before these images]. (A 1:103)¹⁹

6

Third, Hegel is well known as the philosophical founder of the historical study of art, the most important proponent of the idea that artworks must be understood as “of their time,” where such a time could itself be understood comprehensively as an integrated whole, a point of view or *Weltanschauung*. And this premise contributes as well, in quite an unusual and unexpected way, to the thesis that art cannot matter for us now as it used to, that representational art has become, with respect to the highest things, a “thing of the past.” We can begin to see how this works by noting that Hegel, although associated with the philosophical Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany, veers off that course pretty radically on this historical issue. He sees “what his age requires,” what is a “need of spirit,” in quite a different way, and that will be quite important for the “fate of art” issue.

By contrast, Kant, for example, fits the Romantic pattern much better and provides a useful foil for appreciating this point. Kant had denigrated the importance of fine art because the experience of fine art involved not a wholly “free” but what Kant called a “dependent” beauty, and so inevitably, he claimed, was too much a matter of concepts and conceptualizing. An art product was always of a kind, produced with a certain recognizable intention, within a school, after a style, and so on. And this hindered (though it did not absolutely prevent) the “free play” of the faculties that Kant thought essential to aesthetic pleasure. Artworks tend to be instances of kinds, and recognizing and cataloging instances was not what the experience of the beautiful was about. Aesthetic experience involved precisely a kind of inconceivability, together, nonetheless, with some intimation of harmony and meaning, all of which the rule-governed production of fine art made very difficult. This was all connected in Kant to much larger issues, especially his attempt to distinguish the separate contributions of sensibility and the understanding, contra the Leibnizian school. And because Kant insisted on the limited role of the understanding in aesthetic intelligibility, he was somewhat unwittingly preparing the way for a much stronger emphasis on artistic autonomy and even on the aesthetic as a *superior* mode of intelligibility.²⁰

The historical Kant clearly intended by such an argument (especially in his insisting on beauty’s dependence on some extra-human source of significance, on the “super-sensible”) to accentuate the theological and moral importance of natural beauty. However, Kant’s legacy for the art world was to accentuate the greater importance of genius and the sublime in fine art, the former because the unprecedented, inimitable creation of the genius allowed a kind of novelty or delightful surprise that Kant

thought essential to aesthetic experience, and the latter because the defeat of our imagination by the magnitude, dynamism or, in later Romantic versions, the horror of the sublime, also allowed a kind of intelligibility and experience not rule-bound or intellectualizable.²¹ One might hypothesize that such a notion corresponded to a new modern need, for a kind of divine significance without any determinate transcendent realm, without the metaphysics that Kant's first *Critique* removed from the philosophical agenda, a place marked out from and higher than the utilitarian calculation and mass politics already on the horizon, or from the "iron cage" beginning to descend on European societies.

The contrast with Hegel could not be sharper, more anti-Romantic. Hegel regarded the experience of the sublime as historically regressive, an indication of a much less well-developed understanding of "the divine" in all the manifold, elusive senses discussed above. Vague intimations of an indeterminate, horrifying power were, by virtue of their very indeterminacy, already an indication of a much less self-conscious and even less free stage of being in the world. Products of genius also traded, for Hegel, on a kind of indeterminacy and elusiveness that he thought amounted to mere *Schwärmerei*, or romantic claptrap, which were only vestigial in the modern age.

Of course at this point one might wonder, if Hegel is right that such suspicion of indeterminacy, mystery, ineffability, the awe-inspiring, and so forth does comprise our starting position with respect to the "spirit of the times," what then *could* be said for the contemporary role of art, the way it might matter (as high art, not as mere decoration or monuments from the past)? Without further ado, it might seem that Hegel almost treats the domain of art itself as atavistic, as if a bit like reading bird entrails, or astrology. As we have seen, the question at issue for Hegel is not the end of art-making and appreciating, but something like a shift in its status and social role. But we can now see that this modern displacement occurs for him for an unusual reason. Put simply, one of the main reasons for Hegel's view that image- or content-based art seems to matter less and less derives from his comprehensive view of the nature of the modern world. It is, he repeats frequently, a *prosaic*, unheroic world, not much of a subject for the divinizing or at least idealizing transformations of aesthetic portrayal at all. The "Idea" need not "sensibly shine" any longer because it can be grasped conceptually; norms get their grip on us without primary reliance on the sensual. But, said the other way around, the Idea *cannot* "shine"; the sensible appearances of modern ethical life themselves are not fit vehicles for such "shining" because they and our very sensual lives have themselves been rationalized, transformed into practices, habits, and institutions with some sort of rational transparency to themselves.²² *The modern social*

world itself may be rational, in other words, but it is, to say it all at once, just thereby not very beautiful, and its "meaning" is not very mysterious. It has its own kind of domestic, and rather small-screen beauty, we can say—hence all that Hegelian praise for Dutch celebrations of the bourgeoisie—but the “sacredness” of orderly city streets, piano playing, milk pouring, needlework, and fine clothing does not, given that Hegel’s aesthetics is so content-driven, satisfy very lofty aesthetic ambitions.²³ (“Spirit only occupies itself with objects so long as there is something secret [*Geheimen*], not revealed [*nicht Offenbares*], in them,” but now “everything is revealed and nothing obscure” [A 1:604–5].)

This introduces a complicated topic in Hegel studies, especially with regard to his political theory, because such a position represents quite a change from Hegel’s younger days and his Hölderlin-intoxicated hopes for a beautiful Christian community of love. He appears to have become quite impressed with the altered situation of modern individuals, with the, let us say, “dispersed” character of subjectivity in modern societies, all reflecting an acknowledgment of the spiritual effects of ever more divided labor first apparent in Rousseau. In such a world, no one simply could be heroically responsible for much of anything (and so could not be beautiful in action), and the legal and administrative tasks, the daily life, of modern society are indeed, in his favorite word, prosaic. We have already discussed the aesthetic consequences of a disenchanted nature. And it is a striking oddity in Hegel’s project that the full realization of art *as art* should occur quite early in his story about art, that he should insist that Greek art, the art of the Greek polis, *as art* is “better” art, but that modern romantic art is simply better, a greater human accomplishment. But however complicated the issue and Hegel’s reasons for this alteration, such an antisentimental, realist modernism (Hegel does not even credit what would be Baudelaire’s aesthetics of the beauty of modern speed and instability), together with Hegel’s Protestant secularization of the divine, and his view that art evinces the self-image of an age, are all clearly playing a role in Hegel’s restraint with regard to the social and spiritual role of traditional art. This represents a kind of wager on Hegel’s part that the satisfactions of modern (or bourgeois) romantic, familial, economic, and political life were, in a sense, *enough*, that we could do without beautiful depictions of ourselves and our lives or even sublime warnings about its potential emptiness, and so could do without the living role for fine art imagined later. I think it is fairly clear by now that, to say the least, this was a bad bet, as the whole phenomenon of aesthetic politics (especially in fascism) demonstrates, but that is surely another and a longer story.

7

The fourth or last peculiarity in Hegel's treatment of art is the most important and the most difficult to discuss economically. It involves the basic reason why Hegel opposed the grandiose hopes of many of his contemporaries for a renewal of monumental, culturally important, transformative art, and claimed instead that in a certain respect, art (or what we would now regard as premodernist art) had become for us a thing of the past. That reason has much more to do with a new understanding of the mind-world and self-other relations, and at the heart of this new understanding is an altered picture of sensibility, perceptual meaning, and "lived" sociality, or a new sense of what it is to be a materially embodied being for whom experience can mean what it does. Hegel's full case about the status of art within a modern society ultimately relies on a case for a great alteration in the way things basically make sense to us, and a large component of that "basically" involves an altered relation to our own sensibility, something most clearly at play in visual art and its historical transformations.

After all, up to this point one might still characterize Hegel's position as some sort of return to classicism, especially with his definition of beauty as the sensible appearing of an intelligible, essentially nonsensible ideal. Since Hegel understands art cognitively, as a way of apprehending the truth (he rarely mentions aesthetic pleasure as such), and understands that way as a sensible "shining" or appearing, the inference that he was some kind of neoclassicist would not be unreasonable. But Kant's revolution in philosophy, which Hegel, despite criticisms, enthusiastically accepted, essentially destroyed the classical picture of the sensible-intelligible relation.²⁴ Sensibility could not now be understood as an unclear representation of the world which reason could work to clarify or could represent better, nor could it be understood as a vivid, "lively" impression, guiding the abstracting and generalizing intellect. In Kant's famous phrase (the one most relevant for the altered situation within which, according to Hegel, art must make sense now) the senses do not err, not "because they always judge rightly, but because *they do not judge at all*."²⁵ The content of sensibility was, after Kant, to be understood as the material object of the understanding's synthesizing, active work, and the entire intelligible domain (any "possible experience") was now understood as a result of the activity of the understanding, the product of its work. Sensory data became representative as a result of this work by the understanding, and considered apart from such en-forming, conceptualizing activity, it counted as mere stuff, preintelligible materiality. This all also meant that not *all* aspects of our knowledge claims could be said to be guided by the

world, from without. The ultimate authority or legitimacy of our knowledge claims had also to be in some respect *self*-authorizing, required as a condition of there being any sensible evidence.²⁶ In another of Kant's memorable phrases: reason does not beg from nature; it commands—a phrase that already sounds the deepest theme of what would become modernism in the arts: that is, the theme of freedom.²⁷ (Indeed, Kant had himself so spiritualized religion, risking blasphemy by insisting on discussing it “within the limits of reason alone” and making it merely a moral postulate or practical faith, that any sort of “representation” of the divine had already become, thanks to Kant, not inadequate, but simply irrelevant.)

Hegel's narrative of an expanding critical self-consciousness thus fits the modernist refusal to take for granted what a painting or art is, what writing or being an artist is. Such notions were now treated as norms not fixed by nature or human nature but actively (and in Hegel, historically) “legislated” and subject to criticism. And with such questions raised this way, it would be no surprise that art-making and novel writing would themselves become the subjects of art; Proust and James, de Kooning and Pollock being only the most obvious examples.

With this in mind, then, the official Hegelian claim goes like this. The basic principle of modern philosophy (that is, post-Kantianism), modern politics (liberal, republican politics, after a fashion) and modern religion (Protestant post-Reformation religion) has become what Hegel calls “subjectivity” or “reflection,” ultimately a version of critical and rational self-consciousness about the way we actively render the world intelligible, or legislate normative constraints on claims and conduct.²⁸ Normative claims to knowledge, rectitude, spiritual life, or even claims *to be making art*, or that *that is good*, are now made with the self-consciousness that the authority of such claims can always be challenged and defeated (or such claims can simply “die out,” lose historical authority) and must be in some way defensible to and for subjects if they are to be defensible at all. The pre-Hegelian situation is one in which we acted on the basis of such norms but could not fully understand their autonomous status and so proposed social and philosophical justifications to each other that could not be reconciled, that always betrayed an element of “positivity” or mere contingency or power. (One of the most important things Hegel says about this situation, the one most relevant to his use of religious terminology, is that the basic state of human dissatisfaction or alienation is a *self*-alienation, not one from a transcendent God, or even from the truth. Spirit, human being itself, is said *to be* a “wound” which it inflicts on itself, but which it can heal itself [A 1:98].) Art is to be understood as an aspect of the age's reflection on itself (that healing), a way for the spirit of such an age not just to be lived-out, but itself aesthetically thematized.

To put the point in another way: an enduring, continuous human life is not an event or occurrence, a happening, like others. Lives don't just happen; they must be actively led, steered, guided, we now for the first time fully appreciate. As in the stoic tradition, which influenced the German tradition through its influence on Kant, living a human life is not the natural realization of an essence; the great problem being to find a way to "allow" it to grow and flourish in the conditions "naturally" right for it. Rather, it is fundamentally a self-relation, a self-directing agency; at the very minimum a life must be *actively* preserved and protected. A subject must not only "take up the reins" of a life in order to do this, but must do so continuously, and with an eye toward the unity and integration without which lives cannot be coherently led. Moreover, leading a life in this way is reflexive because it always involves actively taking a point of view or stand on some relevant event or person or state in the world, *and* this in an always challengeable and revisable way. In the (Kierkegaardian) language developed by Heidegger and Sartre to make this point, one is a subject (does not flee such an unavoidable self-responsible stance in bad faith or inauthenticity) only by not presuming simply *to be* a subject or *to be* an anything, even while one is not some free-floating mere possibility, not nothing at all.

All of this was necessary to state what is for Hegel the essential limitation of traditional art, and it is not a religious limitation: *representational art cannot adequately express the full subjectivity of experience, the wholly self-legislating, self-authorizing status of the norms that constitute such subjectivity, or thus cannot adequately express who we (now) are.* Only philosophy can "heal" such a self-inflicted wound and allow the self-determining character of experience its adequate expression. ("Only philosophy," that is, in Hegel's official account. I am trying to suggest that there is no reason a form of art, like abstraction, could not make such a point in a nondiscursive way.)²⁹ After such a "healing," of course, fine art will certainly continue to be produced (indeed, Hegel says that he hopes art will always "rise higher and come to perfection" [A 1:103]).³⁰ But what is now possible in post-Kantian speculative philosophy makes the limited and only partially realized subjectivity or self-legislation embodied in works of representational art (art tied directly to "objecthood," to borrow Fried's phrase)³¹ clearer by comparison, and art becomes "a thing of the past."³² It is the historical realization of subjectivity in the modern world (especially the greater realization of freedom in philosophical and political life) that makes representational art (or all art up to and including romantic art) matter less for us than it once did and had to.³³ In an obviously deeply contestable claim: what has come to matter most to us has less and less to do with a visual or even corporeal intelligibility based on what we might now call "pre-

Kantian” assumptions about representation and intelligibility, all because what unavoidably must matter now is the realization of a kind of freedom, autonomy.

8

There are many questions here worth asking, especially since it seems much more intuitive to say that if the underlying theme of modern art is the achievement of freedom, traditional visual art could just give us one indispensable perspective on the lived meaning of freedom, and philosophy, perhaps a modernist philosophy, discursively, *another*. Hegel’s disjunction and claim to hierarchy seem extreme. But it is at least clear that this line of thought in Hegel has very little to do with many of the conventional qualifications on the status of art, almost all of them religious in tone: such things as the Platonic worry about art as illusion, or with the Christian worry about art as idolatry. And Hegel’s historicist stance excludes any nonhistorical answer at all to the question of “the” status of the sensible image or “the” nature of art.³⁴

That is, Hegel’s view of the limitations of aesthetic intelligibility should not be understood as a reflection of what Hegel would call a philosophy of finitude, in the way that religious concerns about the adequacy of the sensible image for representing the divine would express. Such iconoclastic worries amount to a claim about limitations, boundaries, and so on, either because of our inadequacy or the awesome majesty of the represented object, or both, that Hegel, unlike every other post-Kantian modern philosopher except Nietzsche, explicitly rejects. (That is why the “finitude” framework fits Kant so well. It fits Heidegger’s denigration of the “ontic” spectacularly well, but that is another story altogether.) Hegel never tires of distinguishing himself from such a stance. This means that he thinks fine art *is* doing what the “finitists” say it can’t: represent “the divine” (just that it does so partly or incompletely, and under the assumption of Hegel’s own heretical notion of the divine). The contrast to such iconoclasm is not mysticism, negative theology, the ineffable, or some sort of authenticity. According to Hegel it is “the philosophy of infinity,” a discursive account of the whole human world, and therewith the realization of God. By this, Hegel does not mean a philosophy of the limitless void or the like, but an understanding of the “absolute” status of human autonomy, a life understood and lived out—very much in a corporeal, affective, sexual, laboring world—as a collective, rational self-determination, not one determined by nature and fate.

Admittedly, this all amounts to no more than a prolegomenon to a full Hegelian case for modernism in general and for abstraction (a conceptual function for art) in particular. Why traditional art might have become a thing of the past, reminders of a different sense-making practice still partially invoked but no longer endowed with authoritative priority; why on Hegel's view that's the right way to put it, and so forth, are all one thing. What might be reconstructed in any detail in a Hegelian position about future art is quite another, and the variety of artistic moments in any account of the trajectory of modernism is obviously overwhelming. But there are some elements of such a bridge between Hegel's narrative and later modernism that, by now I hope, stand out. The most important issue is that discussed in the preceding section about the historical conditions of sense-making, intentional content, practical authority, and so on. These issues are much like those already obvious much earlier, in Post-Impressionism, say, and especially in Cézanne, as the constituent elements of painterly meaning begin to "come apart," or perhaps come to seem more and more a result of having been actively put together (held together in order to belong together), and where all that becomes thematized as such. (Seurat's points and Cubism's lines and planes could serve the same function.) The relationship between shape, plane, and a sense of weight, actual components in the density of objects, and so their very objecthood, can be now thematized as such. It becomes historically possible, in the extended post-Kantian aftermath that Hegel's narrative relies on, for a sensible take on such individual and independent components *to make sense* as a painting, a material "image," a new way of capturing the mind-world relation (a spontaneity-in-receptivity), because and only because many other aspects of political, religious, and philosophical life have come to make sense, succeed in invoking a norm, in analogous, interconnected new ways too. There is a new historical whole within which these new sorts of "painterly claims" can make sense. That is the heart of the Hegelian prolegomena.³⁵

Correspondingly, we can then begin to see that painterly and indeed sensible representations cannot be understood on some mimetic model of seeing through the image (or sensation) to the object itself, and that without the work of (historically variable) meaning-making in perception, the constituents of meaning are shapes, borders, dots, frames, and so on, *potentialities*; not just as such, but understood conceptually, as moments of sensible meaning which painting can be *about*, thus being about both itself and the possibility of sensible meaning itself. Said another way, the bearer of visual meaning can no longer be taken to be the sensible image just as such, or even the idea, the mental state as such. The bearer of meaning is the concept of painting as such (it is "*abstract*" in this

sense), itself a collectively constituted norm (like all norms, after Hegel), and “realized” as such in modernism. “Abstraction” in this Hegelian sense does not mean abstracting “everything that was not intrinsic to art as such,”³⁶ but abstraction from dependence on sensual immediacy, and so a kind of enactment of the modernist take on normativity since Kant: *self-legislation*.³⁷ (There is an obvious danger here, the temptation of irony, the suspicion that “structures of depiction” are “purely contingent, nothing but devices.”³⁸ Overcoming such temptations is an important element of Hegel’s treatment of Diderot’s *Rameau’s Nephew* and Friedrich Schlegel’s doctrines in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and goes to the issues raised earlier as “second nature.”)

As indicated earlier, the elusive motto for all this, the broad implications of which Hegel understood better than Kant, is Kant’s dense redefinition of any possible object: “that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united.”³⁹ This would provide the context for seeing abstraction as self-conscious, conceptual; not, as with Greenberg, reductionist and materialist. Pollocks and Rothkos are not presentations of paint drips and color fields and flat canvas. They thematize and so render self-conscious components of sensible meaning that we traditionally would not see and understand as such, would treat as given. Said another way, they present the materiality of such components in their conceptual significance; such materiality is mentioned, cited, or quoted, as well as used, as well as occupying space on a stretched canvas. And this can make sense because the “result” character of even sensible apprehension, a generalized idealism evident even in the likes of Nietzsche and Proust, has come to be part of the intellectual habits of mind of modern self-understanding, even if unattended to as such. Such is for Hegel the new way nonrepresentational art might matter.

Modernism after Hegel would then look something like what Hegel prophesied after romantic art: “the self-transcendence of art but *within its own sphere and in the form of art itself*” (A 1:80, my emphasis). One could say that for both Hegel and a major strand of modernism (the strand that culminates in abstractionism), the decisive modern event was the end of the authority of nature as such, in itself, as a norm—a hard-fought practical achievement—together with the insight that this did not, could not mean what the traditionalists always feared—mere “normlessness.” What, instead, a kind of self-authored normativity or human freedom might *be* is a terribly difficult question. But perhaps, over the last hundred years, and especially in the experiments of abstraction, we now have some sense of what it *looks like*, thus both confirming and undermining Hegel’s claim about the way art could now matter.⁴⁰

Notes

I am much indebted to Thomas Pavel for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper; to Thomas, Eric Santner, and Terry Pinkard for many fruitful conversations about Hegel's *Aesthetics* during a seminar in spring 2001; to Stephen Houlgate for helpful comments and criticisms; and to the audience at a conference on abstract art held at the University of Chicago in October 2001, where an earlier version of this paper was first presented. This essay was first published in *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 1 (autumn 2002), 575–98; I am grateful to the editors of *Critical Inquiry* for permission to reprint a slightly different version of this essay here.

1. This is not at all the same thing as saying that the development of Western art tends toward ever greater “formalism,” in the sense of a preoccupation with “pure” form, understood as “without the content.” So again “abstraction” can be a misleading word. But in aesthetic theory as well as ethical theory, Hegel claims to have been able to show how there can be “concrete universals,” a *kind* of independence from particularity that is not the adoption of a “mere one among infinitely many” stance. An analogy: when we say that abstract painting is “formal,” we ought to mean that it has only itself, or painterly possibilities, as its own content, in the same way that for Hegel the content of speculative philosophy is nothing but the history of philosophy itself. Or Proust's novel is about novel writing and so has its own form *as* its content. But the novel is not “empty” of content. Or when people say that Henry James novels are “too stylized,” are “formal” experimentations, they often don't appreciate that such a stylization represents an independence from a fixed perspective on content that itself has a profound moral meaning, *that* content (“independence from a fixed perspective on content”).

2. More specifically, it is “with respect to its [art's] highest vocation” (*nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung*) that it does not matter as it once did (Hegel, A 1:11). Second-place on a list with *that* criterion would still rank awfully high. In this note and hereafter, references to G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), will be abbreviated as A. I have cited Knox's translation, but where there might be some confusion, have added the problematic German phrase from the original German text, G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). References to Hegel's as yet untranslated Berlin lectures, *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21*, ed. Helmut Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), are abbreviated as VAB.

3. See the essay by Stephen Houlgate, “Hegel and the Art of Painting,” in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. William Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 61–82. (I disagree with Houlgate's version of what Hegel would have disagreed with in Greenberg's famous account of abstraction. See note 10 below.)

4. I refer here to the set of issues raised by the well-known letter of Gershom Scholem to Walter Benjamin, quoted and glossed in a very interesting way by Eric Santner in *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 38.

5. In one respect, all Hegel might be saying here is that the production and

appreciation of art in the modern era has become something important in itself, and not because of some religious or civic function. What else he might mean, especially about art's self-reliance, is what is at issue in any interpretation of Hegel's aesthetic theory.

6. T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). A standard classification of such philosophic narratives: there is the Kant-Greenberg (and some people assume Michael Fried) line (the last depends on how one interprets philosophically the categories of "theatricality" and "absorption"); the Hegel-Marx-Clark line; and the Nietzschean line, visible in very different ways in Adorno, Benjamin, and Heidegger, where the whole possibility of sense-making breaks down, initiating a different, perhaps more archaic role for art.

7. One should also note that in most respects, Hegel's lectures on fine art do not present an "aesthetic theory" in the sense that came to be established in British, French, and German thought in the eighteenth century. He only deals in a glancing way with one of the three canonical questions in that aesthetics:

(a) What is the *ontological* status of the artwork or of aesthetic properties; how are such objects to be distinguished from craft works, natural objects; how are properties like beautiful or sublime or ugly to be distinguished, and so on? (Or, what is beauty; a question Hegel rarely takes up as such, merely pronouncing that it is the appearance, the shining, of the Idea [*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*].)

(b) What is distinctive about aesthetic *experience*; how is it different from simple pleasure in sights and tastes, etc., or simple perception, for that matter? (What do we know or understand when we understand that something is beautiful?)

(c) And what can be said about the possibility of distinguishing expressions of aesthetic preferences ("I like this") from *aesthetic claims* ("this is beautiful")? Do aesthetic judgments have any normative authority, and if so on what basis?

There is some Hegelian discussion of the first issue in connection with the relation between art, religion, and philosophy. This is already not a traditional categorization issue, and Hegel does not deal with the standard issues. Rather, Hegel's project might be said to offer an account of what Dieter Henrich has variously called the "resonance" of art in human life and a "diagnosis of the state of art in our time." See Dieter Henrich, *Versuch über Kunst und Leben* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2001). Henrich's account is one of the very few to have appreciated, and with great subtlety, the links between Hegel's philosophy of art and modernism. (Clark's, in a very different way, is another.)

8. Hegel's lectures certainly do have a kind of Protestant, anti-Catholic, Reformation tone, as if the point were something like the growth of such a Reformation spirit of inwardness and anti-idolatry in visual art ("to the Lutherans truth is not a manufactured object"); see G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 416; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–70), 12:496. See also Hegel, *A* 1:103.

9. Compare Schiller's remark in his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (New York: Frederick Unger, 1965), 63: "Beyond question

Man carries the potentiality for divinity within himself; the path to divinity, if we may call a path what never reaches its goal, is open to him in his senses."

10. Religion is always said to be a mere "representation." Contrast here Stephen Houlgate's interpretation in "Hegel and the 'End' of Art," *Owl of Minerva* 29, no. 1 (fall 1997): 1–19. Houlgate argues that because art has "lost" its link with the "divine," it can no longer serve our highest interests and needs, which presumably in his view are still religious. See Houlgate's remarks on p. 9, where he claims both that Hegel approved of Protestant art because it "freed art from dominance by religion" and so allowed it to become "*fully secular*" and that such art allowed us to see "secular forms of activity" as "*not* simply falling outside the religious, monastic life but as 'holy' in themselves" (my emphases). He wants to say both these things because, in his view, Hegel treats modern secular activities such as labor, marriage, the family, and citizenship as truer forms of religiosity than the monastic virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Both these claims seem to me right, but not yet to make clear the limitations of art for Hegel within this new post-Reformation sense of religiosity. I am indebted to Houlgate for correspondence about this issue.

11. Hegel is discussing Titian's portraits.

12. Hegel's expression is that art creates a reality that is itself "besouled [*für sich beseelt*]" (Hegel, *A* 2:834). Another way to put Hegel's point would be to note his appreciation of some dimension of what would be called the "disenchantment" of the world (by Weber, borrowing from Schiller), but that such a realization does not consign us to a banal fate. An appreciation of the "divinity" of human freedom does not reenchant the world; it elevates us above the need for enchantment, an elevation that can have a painterly presence all its own. See Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 34.

13. Kant's account traded on the notion of "disinterestedness."

14. See also Hegel, *A* 2:809, on natural and artificial light. There are several other issues in Hegel that are relevant here, but which would require a separate discussion. Especially important are Hegel's claims in the second volume of the Knox translation of the lectures, where he defends a hierarchical system of the arts themselves, and where the "place" of painting, especially with respect to literature, is an important theme, relevant here as well.

15. It should be noted that these remarks about nature are heretical in another sense too: from the viewpoint of traditional Hegel interpretation. This has it that Hegel held a position somewhat like Plotinus (or at least Schelling), in which the sensible, natural world was an emanation of and so linked to God, or the One. Nature was supposed to be the externalization of God, finally fully self-conscious or "interiorized" in absolute spirit, in philosophy. These passages make that interpretation implausible. This was more specifically and more clearly put by Hegel: "The connection between the beautiful and ourselves is that we catch sight of our own essence in the beautiful" (Hegel, *VAB* 57).

16. These are the kinds of passages that prompt the kind of characterization of the Narcissistic Hegel, he of the great devouring Maw of Subjectivity, familiar to readers of Adorno. Again, it all depends on what one takes the claim to mean. See remarks on this issue in my "Hegel, Modernity, and Habermas," in *Idealism*

as *Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 157–84.

17. Like many of the terms of art necessary to state Hegel's position, "second nature" is another that deserves a book-length treatment. See my "Leaving Nature Behind; or, Two Cheers for Subjectivism," in *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, ed. N. H. Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 58–75.

18. Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 219–20.

19. Compare this statement with: "Modernism turns on the impossibility of transcendence" (Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 22). As indicated above, what is "left" without such transcendence is the issue, and for Hegel, and for Hegel's modernism, what is left is neither materiality as such (resistant to sense, to the work of painting), nor a mere object to be transformed and humanized by the "labor of the concept." What that all amounts to is a large independent issue. For an indication of Clark's view, see his analysis of David's painting *Death of Marat*, especially p. 48.

20. All of this Hegel will dispute, but without, I think, a reversion to classicism. The fact that *art* belongs to the domain of the self-articulation of reason tells us something about Hegel's notion of reason, and hardly makes a point about his regressive classicism.

21. The Kantian sublime should also be distinguished from modern, religious views of the sublime, as in nature's void or infinity in Calvin and Pascal, and that will make clear the heretical character of Kant's position. Rather than provoke a humbling awe, the experience of the sublime is a *two*-step process in Kant and finally confirms a sense of man's absolute supremacy over all of nature by virtue of his moral vocation and its independence from any natural condition or power.

22. I am of course aware that, glancing back at European history in the twentieth century, expressing such Hegelian views without irony or qualification can seem a little naive. But, as in so many cases, we need a comprehensive view of what Hegel means by insisting on the "rationality" of modern ethical life, and I don't believe such an interpretation is yet available among the prominent competitors, descendants of the nineteenth-century left-right Hegel wars. For what I hope is a start, see my "Hegel's Ethical Rationalism" in *Idealism as Modernism*, 417–50.

23. "Works of art are all the more excellent in expressing true beauty, the deeper is the inner truth of their content and thought" (Hegel, *A* 1:74).

24. This is another endlessly contested issue. See my *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) for the argument defending a reading of Hegel through Kantian lenses.

25. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's, 1965), A 293; B 350.

26. The central problem in that endeavor is the one Kant created for aesthetics but which after him, with the rejection of his formalism, became the core modern problem: genuine lawfulness but without a determinate law, or without a possible appeal to a determinate law. And therewith another preview of the modernist spirit. See section 39 of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*; and Luc Ferry's discussion in *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert

de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 15 and 96. The principle that Hegel will settle on in his account of this possibility is basically similar to that introduced by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*: “An der Stelle jedes anderen denken” (section 40).

27. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 653; B 681. When the “ideal,” after Kant, could no longer be identified with a distinct intelligible world (but was instead a goal of ideal and complete intelligibility, the postulation of the “unconditioned”), the status of the sensible also changed dramatically. For the modern Anglophone tradition, it meant the problem of formulating a coherent empiricism, one consistent with mathematical physics, with self-knowledge, memory, and personal identity, one that could deal with the problem of skepticism, and so on. On the other hand, one prominent feature of what is called the “Continental” tradition, viewed in this light, is a much-heightened attention to the significance of aesthetic sensibility, the significance of the fact that a merely empirical apprehension of an artwork is inappropriate. See the first four chapters of Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus*; and J. M. Bernstein’s interesting discussion in *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). (The much-discussed “subjectivization” of the aesthetic realm is thus not a relocation of aesthetic meaning “from” objective perfectionism, classical rules and formulae, and so forth, inward; it is not an interiorization of what had been “out there.” Self-reliance, self-certitude, and constructivism are not in isolation the modernist problems [for Hegel], but a making, the products of which fully embody the freedom of the maker, and reflect that freedom adequately.)

28. See Clement Greenberg: “I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant” (“Modernist Painting,” in Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. John O’Brian [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 85). For a different account that makes the same beginning, see my *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). Greenberg treats modernism as beginning with a kind of Kantian inspiration not to take painting itself (as color on a flat surface) for granted anymore, but to explore *what it is* to put color on a flat, limited (framed) surface. It doesn’t seem to me possible to understand *the significance* of that without understanding the significance of the ideal of critical autonomy, and that move always seems to appear to Greenberg “impure,” an attempt at the tyrannization of painting by something nonpainting, like philosophy, or social theory (very un-Hegelian dichotomies). See the difficulty in his position in “The Case for Abstract Art,” *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, 80, where such a move to abstraction is treated as an antidote against hyper-self-interested, materialistic, anticontemplative mass society (this is what the art *means*) even while he insists it functions as an example of something that “does *not* have to mean” (my emphasis). From Hegel’s point of view this is not a debater’s point, but an indication of how deeply Kantian Greenberg’s program remains. What results from this unclarity in Greenberg is his occasional odd homage to empiricism, scientism, and scientific experimentation in abstract painting. See his extraordi-

nary claims about the “results” of what appears to be modernist “research” in “After Abstract Expressionism,” *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, 131. The point where Greenberg and Hegel join forces is in their opposition to sentimentality in criticism, or to the “aesthetics of sentiment” generally, and a commitment to the conceptual intelligibility of modernist art. This does not necessarily commit either of them to one side of dualism, as Ferry has claimed. Ferry’s view seems to be that if you are not with Bouhours and Debos, you must be attempting to circle back to Boileau. See Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus*, chapter 4.

29. A remark in the spirit of such a reading of Hegelian modernism is T. J. Clark’s on a photograph of Picasso’s paintings at Sorgues: “Painting at Sorgues, says the photograph, stands on the threshold of a new order and chaos; and not just painting, by the looks of it, but picturing in general; and not just picturing, but maybe perceiving; and not just perceiving but maybe being-in-the-world, or at least having-the-world-be-visible; maybe the world itself.” (Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 174). Clark is quite right, I think, then to quote an apposite passage from Hegel on the world historical individual. (My differences with Clark concern a number of points of emphasis, especially over the range and depth and usefulness of appeals to categories like “capitalism” and “socialism,” and with his melancholic treatment of a putative “failure” in a social reconciliation between autonomy and embeddedness in a community, reflected in the “failure” of modernism. See especially chapter 4 on “Cubism and Collectivity,” and chapter 6 on Pollock as “unhappy consciousness,” and, inter alia, pp. 1–13 and p. 259. Although he insists that he is praising Abstract Expressionism, Clark’s reliance on these social categories leads him to characterize the painting movement as “vulgar,” or “the style of a certain petty bourgeoisie’s aspiration to aristocracy, to a totalizing cultural power” [389]. But despite such disagreements, the spirit of the narrative in *Farewell to an Idea* certainly qualifies it as the most ambitiously “Hegelian” treatment of modern art, known to me anyway.)

30. At the close of the lectures, Hegel appears to give fine art a new, different, and quite important function. “Art itself is the most beautiful side of that history [the unfolding of truth in world history] and is the best compensation for hard work in the world and the bitter labor for knowledge” (Hegel, *A 2*:1236–37). Note too that Hegel claims that the supersession of art by philosophy also provides “an inducement for taking up the essence of art too in a profounder way” (Hegel, *A 1*:21).

31. Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148–72. I agree with what I take to be Fried’s attitude: there was no failure of modernism, no exhaustion by the end of Abstract Expressionism. Rather, there was (and still is) a failure to appreciate and integrate the self-understanding reflected in such art (the same kind of failure to appreciate modernism, or the same kind of straw men attacks, in what we call postmodernism). The aftermath—Minimalism, “literalism,” Op and Pop Art, postmodernism—can better be understood as evasions and repressions than alternatives.

32. Again: a thing of the past only with respect to what Hegel called the

“realization of the Absolute.” Hegel’s position does not entail the dispensability of art, especially when viewed from other perspectives, like rhetoric and education. In fact, Hegel treats both art and religion itself as forms of “representation” that, while inadequate philosophically, are nevertheless indispensable elements of modern life, however imperfect when viewed from the Olympian heights of “the Absolute.”

33. There is a tension here in Hegel’s position. Prior to the Hegelian stage of modernity, the intuitive expression of “the truth” which art alone made possible was counted as a necessary element in the becoming self-conscious of such a truth, while after that stage, art was to merely express sensibly a truth attained properly by philosophy. But this would mean that in such a philosophical stage, art would no longer be functioning *as art*. As art, it is an aspect of a sensible reflection of truth unavailable in any other way. See the discussion by Dieter Henrich in “Art and Philosophy of Art Today: Reflections with Reference to Hegel,” in *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism*, ed. Richard E. Amacher and Victor Lange, trans. David Henry Wilson et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 107–33. See especially Henrich’s note on p. 114 about Hegel’s 1828 aesthetics lectures. (This essay is a catastrophically bad translation of a powerful, original article by Henrich that compellingly defends the relevance of the Hegelian analysis for modern art. See D. Henrich, “Kunst und Kunstphilosophie in der Gegenwart,” in *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, vol. 2: *Immanente Ästhetik—Ästhetische Reflexion*, ed. W. Iser [1966; München: Wilhelm Fink, 1983], 11–33, 524–31.)

34. Hegel’s position is not easy to get out on the table for a hearing, not least because post-Nietzschean and post-Heideggerian European philosophy have been so hostile to and so suspicious of the notion of “subjects leading their lives reflexively.” Subjects have become epiphenomena of social forces, texts, discourses, language, gender, the unconscious, Being, the ethnos, and so on. Hegel’s attempt to enlist art in the project of the actualization of self-conscious subjectivity is viewed under the shadow of that suspicion, and so his even wilder claim that romantic art finally revealed the limitations of art as such in such a project is not now taken very seriously.

35. I am assuming that it is obvious that none of these claims depends on demonstrating any actual historical influence of Kant on modernist painters. The “realization” of philosophy in the historical, social world is a complex, contentious topic, but there is no reason to set out by limiting such realization to instances of painters reading the *Critique of Pure Reason*. And perhaps it would be better to call this an introduction to a prolegomenon. We would still need a defense of a number of controversial notions to make the Hegelian account more philosophically defensible: the notions of *distinct historical epochs*, a distinctly *philosophical diagnosis* of an epoch, of the *causality of fate*, or of *philosophical fate*, and the sense of *historical rationality* invoked, the claim that there is a way of considering a major cultural change as a *rational outcome* in some way of a prior form of life.

36. Hans Belting, “The Dream of Absolute Art,” in *The Invisible Masterpiece* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 295.

37. Again, this is a very long story. For an abstract formulation, see my

“Hegels Begriffslogik als die Logik der Freiheit,” in *Der Begriff als die Wahrheit: Zum Anspruch der Hegelschen “Subjektiven Logik,”* ed. Anton Koch, Alexander Oberauer, and Konrad Utz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).

38. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 221. One more remark about Clark. The difference between this take on modernism and his involves a different tone in the invocation of Hegel. Hegel’s defense of the modernity of art (romanticism in his view, even if of diminished importance with regard to the highest things; modernism, even abstraction, in the view I am attributing to the immortal Hegel) is indeed a defense of the ultimacy of “bourgeois modernity.” But, as with everything else, that depends on what that involves. Hegel’s soberness about what it involves can be bracing, but it is not, to invoke an old term from Marcuse, “one-dimensional.” On the contrary. See chapter 7, “Unending Modernity,” in my *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*.

39. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 137.

40. This last remark pulls hard at only one thread intertwined with many others in Hegel’s assessment of the state of art at the end of romanticism. Specific aesthetic issues—his evaluation of the greater importance of color over drawing and linear perspective, his apparent commitment to the paramount importance of human beings and objects that reflect human moods, and his apparent linking of aesthetic with ethical ideals (with regard to Christian love, for example)—would all need further treatment before this suggestion of a Hegelian sympathy for abstraction could be defended. But Stephen Houlgate, in the two articles noted earlier in these notes, already seems to me to go too far in excluding the abstractionists from the Hegelian aesthetic realm, the realm of inwardness and “objectless” freedom. The question is not really about abstraction but about which historical forms allow what Hegel, in his comments on late romantic art, described as the attempt to preserve something “substantial” in art (Hegel, *A* 1:602)—an impetus that already sounds “Friedean.” And that issue cannot be assessed in modernism without attention to the rather heterodox view of freedom that Hegel defends as the modern “substantiality.” This whole situation is, again, made somewhat more difficult by the influence of Greenberg’s criticism, which treats the autonomy of art so purely, so “surrenders” (to use Greenberg’s telling word) to the flatness and materiality of painterly expression, that he makes it hard to answer the obvious Hegelian question: What does it mean (why does it matter) that such self-authorizing painterly norms (flatness and frame) came to lay claim on the aesthetic imagination so exclusively?

Art, Religion, and the Modernity of Hegel

John Walker

In Hegel's philosophy, art and religion both come to an end and yet continue to be in modernity. In this essay I want to explore the relationship between the ending and the afterlife, and consider what light that relationship can shed on the relevance of Hegel's philosophical aesthetics today.

1

The structure of Hegel's thought suggests a paradoxical kind of analogy between the fates of art and religion in the modern age: that is to say, Hegel's own. Art and religion are both modes of absolute spirit. Both therefore, in different ways, express and communicate—they reveal—the ultimate cognitive and ethical truth which is what Hegel means by “spirit.” Art manifests that truth in sensuous embodiment or intuition (*Anschauung*), while religion enables us to worship it in the mode of religious representation (*Vorstellung*).¹ But the capacity of art and religion to reveal the truth of spirit also means that they are connected to both history and the third mode of absolute spirit, which is philosophy. For Hegel, absolute spirit cannot be without being revealed in and through human history.

The crucial feature of the modern consciousness, Hegel argues, is its demand for self-conscious knowledge. In philosophy, the critical philosophy inaugurated by Kant insists that the key to reliable reasoning is our capacity to become reflectively aware of the categories which govern our thought. In politics, the legacy of the French Revolution means that political authority in modern societies depends upon the self-conscious assent of their members. In religion, the culture of civic conscience and ethical inwardness fostered by Protestantism means that the certainty of faith itself must become self-conscious. The modern believer's relation-

ship to God is inseparable from the modern sense of human selfhood. All these features of modernity mean that philosophy can articulate modern experience in a way denied to art and religion. Philosophy, for Hegel, is the most self-conscious form of knowledge and so most appropriate to the self-understanding of the modern age.

This is the source of Hegel's thesis of the cognitive and, in the modern world, the cultural priority of philosophy over art. Art, Hegel argues, can be cognitively autonomous (that is, independent of philosophy) only when the connection between human selfhood and cultural experience has not yet become reflectively self-conscious, but remains partially immediate or "given."² Such were the worlds of ancient Greece and the Christian Middle Ages. But now the self can no longer be *known* in culturally immediate terms. This argument is the source of what has misleadingly been called Hegel's thesis of the "end of art." In fact, Hegel suggests in his *Aesthetics* only that art, in the modern age, has come to an end as a self-sufficient mode of truth. The *truth* of art cannot now be articulated in art, but only by philosophy which relates art to the modern critical consciousness. The truth of art must be both preserved and superseded (*aufgehoben*) by philosophy. While art itself has lost its centrality in modern culture, Hegel suggests that the "science of art" (*Wissenschaft der Kunst*) can partially fill its place. But he also argues that modern art must seek and find both new subject matter and new forms of representation appropriate to the content furnished by modern experience.³ Indeed, Hegel argues, one of the key features of modernity in art will be an increased concern with the sphere of representation itself. This changed function and significance of art tend to lead it away from *Anschaung* or sensuous embodiment and toward the sphere of *Vorstellung* or representation, which is that of religion.⁴ Similarly, Hegel argues that the truth of religion can only be preserved in modernity by philosophy, both because only philosophical knowledge can satisfy the modern mind and because it is the purpose of God that spirit should become fully self-conscious.⁵

For Hegel, then, the truths of art and religion can and must now be *aufgehoben* by that of philosophy. There is therefore a paradox in Hegel's account of art and religion as modes of absolute spirit in the modern age. Hegel differs from his idealist predecessors and his postmodern critics alike in his insistence that art and religion are both vehicles of cognitive and ethical *truth*, a truth different in mode but not in substance from that which philosophy expounds. But the doctrine which enables him to say this—the idea of absolute spirit in history—also means that art and religion must, each in a specific way, be *aufgehoben* in modernity by philosophical insight. For Hegel, modern art and modern religion reflect the truth of modernity for the very reason that they can never adequately embody it: they are what Raymond Geuss calls "necessary failures" in their

task of communicating the ultimate truth about modern experience.⁶ I want to inquire whether the paradox in Hegel's account of art and religion in his own age suggests another, equally relevant to our own. Does the loss of *cognitive* autonomy which Hegel discerns in the aesthetic and the religious consciousness of his time suggest the emergence of a *cultural* autonomy especially relevant to the post-Hegelian world which is in key respects our own? What might this suggest about the relationship between religious and artistic discourse in contemporary culture? To approach these questions, we must first consider in more detail the relationship between Hegel's accounts of the fates of art and religion in modernity.

Hegel speaks of art no less than religion as a way in which the ultimate truth is manifested or revealed. In his *Aesthetics* he defines beauty in art as "the sensuous appearance of the Idea" (*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*).⁷ The term *Scheinen* is notoriously difficult to translate, especially because *Schein* often means "appearance" in the sense of illusion and *scheinen* can mean "to seem," with the implication that what seems is not true. But Hegel explicitly warns against this interpretation. For Hegel, *Schein* means appearance, not deception (*Täuschung*) or even illusion. Art is a medium in which the essence (*Wesen*) of truth appears (*scheint*). Indeed, the act or process of this appearance is essential to the truth:

But appearance itself is essential to essence [*der Schein selbst ist dem Wesen wesentlich*]. Truth would not be truth if it did not show itself and appear, if it were not truth for someone and for itself, as well as for the spirit in general too.⁸

Aesthetic reality, Hegel says, might differ from external or empirical reality, but in so doing it reveals the truth of reality itself:

Art liberates the true content of phenomena from the pure appearance and deception of this bad, transitory world, and gives them a higher actuality, born of spirit. Thus, far from being mere pure appearance, a higher reality and truer existence is to be ascribed to the phenomena of art in comparison with [those of] ordinary reality.⁹

Hegel's use of the term *Schein*, then, differs radically from the dualism implicit in Kant's use of the term *Erscheinung* to mean a world of sensuous appearance different from that of ultimate truth, as well as from Kant's characterization of the sphere of art as one of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), radically distinct from cognitive truth.¹⁰ Indeed, for Hegel, art (like the other modes of absolute spirit) is one of the ways in which that dualism is itself shown to be illusory.

To be sure, the way Hegel thinks art reveals truth is very different

from that which he associates with religion. But in his *Aesthetics* no less than in his *Philosophy of Religion* he insists that the capacity for self-disclosure belongs essentially to the ultimate truth. The idea of revelation, relevant as much to aesthetic as to theological discourse, lies at the root of the dialectical tension between art and Christianity which he explores in the *Aesthetics*.

According to Hegel, the idea of art as a self-disclosure or revelation of truth finds its fullest expression in Christian culture. In Christian art in its high medieval form, what is revealed or externalized is the inner truth of the spirit itself: spirit is sensualized (*versinnlicht*) and sensuality is spiritualized (*vergeistigt*). This is related to the idea of Incarnation and especially the belief that God really appears and can therefore be embodied aesthetically in human form. For the Christian imagination, Hegel says, particularity is the bridge by which truth appears:

For example, the Christian imagination will be able to represent God in human form and its expression of spirit, only because God himself is here completely known in himself as spirit. Particularity is, as it were, the bridge to appearance [*die Bestimmtheit ist gleichsam die Brücke zur Erscheinung*].¹¹

Christian art is impelled by Christian consciousness to seek to embody the spirit in aesthetic form. Yet Christianity itself, especially its modern Protestant form, protests that the spirit can never be *fully* embodied, because the reality of Incarnation is and must always remain in excess of its aesthetic expression. Hegel therefore speaks of a “deeper comprehension of truth” (*eine tiefere Fassung der Wahrheit*), which he sees as implicit in Christianity as such and explicit in the modern Christian consciousness. For this modern conception, the dependence of art upon a particular sensuous medium means that it can never truly embody the spirit. Art, therefore, exists for the modern consciousness more as representation (*Vorstellung*) than as actual embodiment:

In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has been transferred into our ideas [*Vorstellungen*] instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place.¹²

Particularity has ceased to be a bridge and has become a barrier to appearance. Yet this change, it would seem, is a product of the history of Christianity itself: the religion of Incarnation.

In the *Aesthetics*, Hegel constantly emphasizes this dialectic in the relationship between Christianity and the art of the Christian era. It is at the core of his account of the emergence and decline of modern art. The key to that account is his analysis of the end of the romantic form of art. By “romantic art” Hegel means the art of the whole medieval and post-medieval age. Romanticism, for Hegel, is a product of Christianity and especially of the Christian art of the Middle Ages. Like the high Christian art of medieval Christendom, modern romantic art is always concerned with the inner life of the soul. Its form and content are significant only if (and because) they have the capacity to make that life manifest. Yet, in the post-Reformation and post-Enlightenment age, art has lost that capacity, because the inner life is no longer embodied in an objective world of faith.¹³ For the modern Christian, the art of European Christendom has become an object of appreciation, not of worship. Protestantism insists that God is really present only in the heart and that images cannot and should not be made to represent God:

Thus, the “after” of art consists in the fact that there dwells in the spirit the need to satisfy itself solely in its own inner self as the form for truth to take. . . . No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek Gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer.¹⁴

Hence the characteristic concern of the romantic art of Hegel’s own time is not to embody a transcendence which is experienced as really present. It is to imagine aesthetically a transcendence which is known *not* to be adequately embodied in the form of its aesthetic representation.

However, Hegel’s actual account of modern literature and visual art suggests that precisely this *inadequacy* of aesthetic representation—the dysfunction between form and content intrinsic to modern art—does express *aesthetically* the truth about modern experience. For it is just that experience which gives rise to the divorce. Hegel treats the whole of art from the advent of Christianity to his own time under the rubric “the romantic form of art” (*die romantische Kunstform*). He treats modern art as the “dissolution of the romantic form of art” (*die Auflösung der romantischen Kunstform*). Hegel describes the aesthetic mode of truth in modernity as the attempt of the romantic form of art to represent the truth of modern experience: what he calls “the romantic mode of representation in relation to its content” (*Die romantische Darstellungsweise im Verhältnis zu ihrem Inhalt*).¹⁵ For Hegel the *aesthetic* spirit of the modern age is still that of romanticism: that is to say, it is informed by an inwardness which can never become fully self-conscious. However, the objective spirit of modern cul-

ture *as a whole* is defined by the reflective self-consciousness which also informs Hegel's philosophical account of modern art. This double emphasis is central to his account of romantic and postromantic art.

Hegel discusses the literature and visual art of his own age in terms which suggest a translation from romanticism to realism. In the modern age, Hegel argues, the range of subject matter *intrinsically* related to the romantic form of art—actual or historical themes which disclose a transcendent, implicitly religious, meaning—has become very much reduced (*sehr verengt*). That is so because modern people can no longer believe that particular natural or historical phenomena embody or represent the ultimate truth of spirit. But for this very reason the possible field of content for modern art has been infinitely extended (*unendlich erweitert*).¹⁶ In Hegel's age, the romantic spirit—what Hegel calls “the subjective heart” (*das subjective Gemüt*)—still desires to express and embody itself in experience. But, in modernity, that spirit cannot be satisfied by any particular experience. It therefore takes for its field of expression the whole of “reality” itself: history no less than nature, the material world of modern society no less than emotional and psychological life. The world which once really embodied the romantic spirit—Catholic Christendom—offered in the cultural reality of Christianity an appropriate subject matter for romantic art. Now, however, the object of postromantic art can only be that which is contingently presented to it—or, what is the same thing, that which it arbitrarily chooses—in modern experience. But that experience can no longer unself-consciously reflect the spirit of Christian inwardness which once gave romanticism its meaning.

This new development, Hegel argues, produces an important ambiguity within modern art itself. The multiplicity and contingency of possible objects (*Zufälligkeit der Gegenstände*) for modern art means that postromantic art must concern itself with “ordinary” reality itself: what Hegel calls “actual reality in what must appear from an ideal standpoint as its prosaic objectivity” (*die reale Wirklichkeit in ihrer vom Standpunkt des Ideals aus betrachtet prosaischen Objektivität*).¹⁷ This Hegelian thesis differs radically from the view, current among many German aestheticians of the postromantic age, that art must fight a kind of rearguard action against the onset of modernity: that because modern reality is intrinsically “prosaic,” the appropriate object of modern art cannot lie in modern experience at all, but only in an attempt to preserve in aesthetic form an idea of beauty which is always associated with the past.¹⁸ For Hegel, the turn of romantic art toward the sphere of ordinary life sustains into the modern age one of the perennial sources of realism itself: the *sermo humilis* or transfiguration of common experience which has its roots in the Christian idea of truth incarnate in the real.¹⁹ However, at the same time modern

subjectivity can never be fully satisfied by *any* of the themes which offer themselves as possible objects for modern art. It is for this reason, Hegel suggests, that a key characteristic of the romantic mode of art—an ironic attitude to the relationship between aesthetic form and objective content—becomes especially important at the very moment when romanticism shows signs of modulating into realism.

The fate of romanticism derives from a cultural history which makes the aesthetic embodiment of spirit—the *raison d'être* of art itself—impossible. That history, for Hegel, defines modernity itself. If art is connected to history as a mode of absolute spirit, then the real object of modern art must be the reality of modern experience. But the very character of that experience, Hegel suggests, means that it cannot adequately be expressed in *aesthetic* terms. In modern (that is, postromantic) art, then, form is ultimately at odds with substance. At the same time, Hegel insists, because modernity means the *sundering* of subjectivity from every organic bond, something more than a philosophical—that is, a conceptual—articulation of reality is urgently necessary. The *experience* of modernity requires a “warmer peace with reality” than philosophy can provide.²⁰ The relationship of subjectivity to society which modern art reflects, Hegel suggests, will be characterized by that very “unrest and pain” (*Unruhe und Schmerz*) which are the fate of humanity unreconciled to the objective condition of modern life.²¹

Hegel's thesis of the cognitive priority of philosophy in modernity is thus partially balanced by a *cultural* analysis of the reasons for the *persistence of art*. Modern society, he argues, is intrinsically “prosaic” because it no longer reflects the inner life of the soul.²² Yet he also argues persuasively that the modern literary form of the realist novel does indeed articulate some central aspects of modern experience: consciousness of society as the sphere of mechanism and contingency, separation of public from private consciousness, the displacement of ideal values from the outward social into the inner psychological domain. Hegel analyzes in detail the loss of organic connection between form and content which characterizes modern literature, poetry, and painting. But his global judgment about the significance of modern art is determined less by this sense of cultural relevance than by his thesis of an inescapable cognitive deficit in modern aesthetic experience. For Hegel, modern art can neither make us whole nor command our whole attention.

Hegel's historical argument about the link between art and religion in modernity is paralleled by a more conceptual one about the form of modern art. Modern art, Hegel argues, is essentially abstract. That is to say, it can suggest or reflect, but never adequately express or embody, the reality of its object.²³ That is why modern art tends to move away from the

sphere of *Anschauung* (sensuous embodiment or intuition) which characterized classical art and toward the sphere of *Vorstellung* (representation) which belongs especially to religion. Unlike *Einbildungskraft* (imagination), *Vorstellung* or representation has a real, not an illusory, object. But consciousness guided by representation can never be *fully* conscious of that object. In other words, the object of representation is really but never exhaustively present to the mind which beholds it. In his *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel associates the idea of representation with both particular religious practices (such as the veneration of the cross or of religious icons) and the attitude of prayer and worship, in which God must always remain Other to be worshipped in the heart.²⁴ In his *Aesthetics*, he links the move from *Anschauung* to *Vorstellung* in modern art to the suggestion that art is in some respects closer to religion in modernity than it was in the past history of Christianity. Just as art had a cultural prehistory, it now has a cultural posthistory, in which the fate of art is increasingly bound up with religion:

Now the next sphere, which transcends the realm of art, is religion. Religion has representation [*Vorstellung*] as its form of consciousness, for the Absolute has been removed from the objectivity of art into the inwardness of the subject and is now given to representation in a subjective way, so that mind and feeling, the inner subjective life in general, becomes the chief factor.²⁵

To be sure, the posthistory of art must for Hegel also logically exist in philosophy, which is the fullest conceptual development of the inwardness of the modern spirit. Yet he is thoroughly aware that the move to philosophy is only one path which inwardness can take, and that there will still be inwardness left over when philosophy has finished its work. The task of philosophy is to reconcile, by conceptual knowledge, the inwardness of modern subjectivity to the truth of the modern world. For Hegel, however, reconciliation in conceptual thought is not identical with reconciliation in the spirit:

Now philosophy recognises the Concept in everything, and only thereby is it conceptual and genuine thinking. Nevertheless the Concept, truth implicit [*an sich*], is one thing and the existence which does or does not correspond with truth, is another.²⁶

The modern subject knows abstractly or *an sich*, but not yet concretely or *an und für sich*, that it can grasp the reality of modern experience only by understanding what it is to be a *self* in the Hegelian sense: a person expressing his or her selfhood, and finding their identity in, the ethical world of objective spirit:

Now since the content of our interests and aims is present at first only in the one-sided form of subjectivity, and the one-sidedness is a restriction, this deficiency shows itself at the same time as an unrest, a grief [*Unruhe und Schmerz*], as something negative. In itself, that is to say, the individual in his essential nature is the totality [*An sich selbst nämlich, seinem Begriffe nach, ist das Subjekt das Totale*], not the inner alone, but equally the realisation of this inner through and in the outer. If now he exists one-sidedly *only* in one form, he therefore falls at once into the contradiction of being, in essence the whole, but in his existence, only one side.²⁷

The reconciliation of the spirit must be a real and concrete one, which addresses the *experience* of the subject in the modern age. The reconciliation does not cancel out, but rather transforms and transfigures, the reality of what Hegel calls “pain, negation and unrest.” This concrete transformation of human subjectivity is the task of religion. Religion is the sphere of deep inwardness which can neither be fully thought nor fully embodied, but only represented. Religious consciousness thus goes beyond the immediacy of art without approaching the exhaustive clarity of the philosophical concept. It addresses both the need of the modern subject to be reconciled to the spirit and the resistance of modernity to reconciliation in thought alone:

For religion is the universal sphere in which the *one* concrete totality comes home to the consciousness of man as his own essence and as the essence of nature. And this one genuine actuality alone evinces itself to him as the supreme power over the particular and the finite, whereby everything otherwise separated and opposed is brought back to a higher and absolute unity.²⁸

The modern aesthetic consciousness, Hegel is saying, is impelled by its own inner dialectic toward the sphere of religious representation. His argument certainly suggests that the condition of religion in modernity can shed light on the fate of art. Is the converse also true: can the modern fate of art contribute to our understanding of the religious condition of the modern age?

2

In the passage just quoted, Hegel remarks that the life of the spirit which in feeling is blessedness, and in thought knowledge or cognition, can be described *in general* as “life in religion” (*das Leben in der Religion*).²⁹ What

does he mean by this? This statement is crucial both to Hegel's understanding of "absolute spirit" and to the question of whether there can be an end of religion in modernity in the same sense as an end of art.

For Hegel, the words "God" and "absolute spirit" mean the same thing; but the appropriate conditions for their use differ.³⁰ Hegel describes philosophically as absolute spirit the same ultimate reality which, he says, worship calls God and is present in different ways in the three modes of art, religion, and philosophy. Yet the idea of absolute spirit as such is a religious idea, not only because it encompasses a specifically religious apprehension of the truth but also (and more importantly) because it means that the objects of philosophy and religion must ultimately be the same. Hegel uses the term "religion" both (as in the phrase just quoted) to mean the reality of absolute spirit and to mean a particular way of experiencing (or telling about) that reality: "Thus religion and philosophy coincide in one. In fact philosophy is itself the service of God; it is religion. . . . They differ in the peculiar character of their concern with God."³¹ More concretely, Hegel claims that the real history of Christianity—especially the forms of philosophy, religious consciousness, and art which that history has produced—actually is and shows itself to be what the words "absolute spirit" mean. The fact that religious consciousness is no longer autonomous—that religious knowledge can be complete only in the light of philosophy—is, for Hegel, part of the meaning of Christianity itself. If (as Hegel claims) what religion means is fully disclosed only in Christianity, it cannot make sense to speak of an end of religion. It might, however, make sense to speak of the end of a self-sufficiently religious mode of consciousness of the reality which the word "religion" means. If so, Hegel's account of the fate of religion in modernity will have much in common with his account of the fate of art.

In the post-Enlightenment world, Hegel argues, religious consciousness has become divided into two camps: rationalism, which defines religious doctrines only by the negative dialectic of philosophical critique; and pietism, which abjures conceptual articulation altogether in favor of the silent intensity of the heart.³² Both, for Hegel, fail to grasp what religion is: the life of the spirit by which the self becomes self-conscious. What we call our "selves" are constituted by a relationship to the infinite self-consciousness which is God. We do not become self-conscious *only* by reflecting about ourselves. But we cannot become self-conscious *without* reflecting about ourselves. Hegel's insight is that the power of self-consciousness is the power of self-conscious spirit: a power which works through, but is always in excess of, the self which can be an object of the mind. It is therefore a contradiction in terms for the religious mind to seek any purely immediate, or any purely reflective, form of religious

knowledge. Our knowledge of God is inseparable from, but can never be reduced to, our self-consciousness *about* that knowledge.

But if we elucidate what is implied in the thesis of immediate knowledge, what is immediately declared by it, then God himself is expressed in relation to consciousness in such a way that this relation is something inseparable or that we must consider both sides together, and this is the essential object of our consideration. This is itself the philosophical Idea, and is not opposed to the philosophical concept. According to the philosophical concept God is spirit, concrete; and if we inquire more precisely what spirit is, it turns out that the basic concept of spirit is the one whose development constitutes the entire doctrine of religion. . . . *Spirit is for spirit* and of course not merely in an external, contingent manner. Instead it is spirit only insofar as it is *for* spirit. This is what constitutes the concept of spirit itself.³³

Religion exists because being can become self-conscious, and because self-consciousness is nothing other than the intelligible form of being itself. However, in the consciousness of Hegel's age, this insight has been lost by a philosophy which is unaware of the significance of its own reflection. The critical and postcritical philosophy of Kant and his successors, in demonstrating the necessary link between all religious doctrines and the categories of human thought, risks reducing theological truth to reflection about those categories themselves. This kind of rationalism, Hegel argues, makes any true philosophical theology impossible, because it reduces the life of self-conscious spirit to a dead object of the mind. It is the work not of reason (*Vernunft*) but of the understanding (*Verstand*), for which the reflective mind is always outside what it reflects about. It therefore provokes the reaction of pietism, which rejects reflection entirely in search of an immediacy which can never be real. The remedy, Hegel argues, can only be a religious philosophy as he understands it: a form of reflection which shows and says that self-consciousness is self-conscious spirit.³⁴

This is the constant theme of Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, especially those sections which deal with modern Protestantism and the philosophical theology of Hegel's own time. In the closing pages of the 1831 manuscript of the *Philosophy of Religion*, however, the tone changes in a way which jars with the emphasis of the lectures as a whole.³⁵ There Hegel perceives a divorce between philosophy and Christian experience in the culture of his time, which relates not only to the Enlightenment and its legacy, but also to the kind of insight which his own lectures have sought to give:

This conceptual religious knowledge (i.e., that provided by philosophy) cannot by its very nature be universal, and it is moreover only knowledge within the Christian community itself. Thus in the kingdom of the spirit three stages or estates [*Stufen oder Stände*] are formed: the first is immediate unself-conscious religion and faith, the second is that of the understanding, reflection and enlightenment, and the third is finally philosophy. If we consider the final realization of the Christian community [*die Realisierung der Gemeinde*], we see its spiritual reality dissolve into this opposition. It therefore seems that when the Christian community is finally realized it also passes away. . . . To speak of passing away is to end on a note of disharmony.

But what can be done about that? This disharmony exists in reality itself. For us the conflict has been resolved by philosophical knowledge, for the purpose of these lectures was to reconcile reason with religion: to grasp the manifold forms of religion as necessary and to find truth and the Idea in revealed religion. But this reconciliation is itself only a partial one without general validity. Philosophy in this connection is a separate sacred sphere, and its servants an isolated order of priests, which must preserve the heritage of truth and not become absorbed in the world. How the temporal empirical present is to find its way out of this conflict is not the immediate practical business of philosophy.³⁶

Philosophical insight, Hegel says, can never be accessible to more than a cultured minority: what he calls an “isolated order of priests.” He suggests that his philosophical audience (“we”) is itself such a group, who are indeed able to reconcile their intellectual life to their Christianity in the light of his own philosophical theology. But this reconciliation is both spiritually and culturally partial. The philosophically educated will never be able to connect with the life of the people, who are therefore “deserted by their teachers” (*so sieht es sich von seinen Lehrern verlassen*), even if Christianity persists in their experience as “infinite pain” (*unendlicher Schmerz*).³⁷ Here the problem is not the cognitive adequacy of any particular philosophy to the task of philosophical theology, but the cultural impotence of philosophy itself in the general life of the modern age. An alienated faith persists in the life of the people because of the very cultural situation which makes the philosophical reinterpretation of faith their teachers’ only option.

In this crucial passage Hegel seems to hint at an “end of religion” analogous to the “end of art.”³⁸ The religious like the aesthetic mode of truth, he suggests, can no longer in the post-Enlightenment modern age be a self-sufficient expression of spirit. It must ultimately be *aufgehoben* by the truth of philosophy. When the Christian community (*Gemeinde*) fully

realizes the truth of spirit in philosophical terms, it ceases to exist as a specifically religious community. Paradoxically, this religious identity was preserved in the age of the high Enlightenment, which really did experience philosophical insight as incompatible with the truth of religious experience.³⁹ However, now that the rift has been philosophically healed, the possibility of an integrally religious consciousness of ultimate truth seems to have disappeared. Hegel certainly speaks here of the ending or “going to ground” (*Untergang*) of the religious consciousness at least as emphatically as he does in the *Aesthetics* of the “end of art.”⁴⁰ In both cases, the end is accomplished by a pain which philosophy cannot take away.

Hegel describes this process in theological terms as the loss from religion, in the wake of the Enlightenment critique, of concrete and particular knowledge. In this situation, religious knowledge becomes divorced from religious experience. The intellectual life of religion is reduced to the conceptual or historical analysis of the doctrinal forms in which faith is defined. This, Hegel remarks, is as alien to the truth of religion as a discussion of the ownership and history of a painting would be to the truth of art.⁴¹ For Hegel, religious knowledge is never real unless it is concrete, particular, and determinate. Despite his Protestantism he is suspicious of the Calvinist reduction of faith to the word. He gives a central role to the Eucharist, which he describes not as a memorial but as the real presence of God in the heart.⁴² In the *Philosophy of Religion*, his Christology is not in the first place a philosophy of history or a theology of culture. Its core is the “scandal of particularity”: the truth that Christ is an individual and particular person (*ein Dieses*) with an individual and a particular self (*ein Ich*). The reality of the absolute Idea must be brought forth in the form of human certainty. What matters is that “it be seen and experienced in the world.”⁴³

It is just this particular and concrete kind of experience, Hegel powerfully argues, which modern culture threatens to foreclose. His analysis of this condition in the religious life of modernity has many points of contact with his account of modern art. As we have seen, Hegel perceives an inner affinity between Christianity and artistic expression, because in the religion of the Incarnation “particularity is the bridge to appearance.” But modernity is a culture in which experience is defined by general laws, not individual cases: a culture where particularity is a scandal indeed.⁴⁴ This culture is the source of the movement of modern art toward representation, in which spiritual truth is never fully embodied in a particular form, but represented as an Other which is always beyond the means of aesthetic expression. That same culture, Hegel shows, is also responsible for the modern fate of religion, especially the modern Protestantism of which Hegel is the most acute philosophical exponent. Does Hegel’s under-

standing of the link between the modern fates of art and religion, applied to our own modernity two centuries later, suggest that the link between religious and aesthetic communication is equally relevant to our own age?

3

For Hegel, philosophy is more than a particular discipline of knowledge. It is its time grasped in thought: a cultural and existential activity which responds to the human need to be “at home” in the world by comprehending it.⁴⁵ It is one—but by no means the only—means by which the self (*das Ich*) becomes “at home in the world.” The importance Hegel gives to philosophy as such a means derives from his understanding of the fate of human selfhood in his time. But his time and that fate are not our own. Some of the differences are the product of the very power of Hegel’s thought to change the way we conceive human subjectivity in both historical and philosophical terms. But that very power can also blind us to difference.

A key motivation for the emergence of Hegel’s mature speculative system was a concern about the link between otherness and domination. Much of his early work is concerned with the problem of positivity in both philosophical thought and religious experience. By “positivity” Hegel means truth which is experienced and articulated more as an external object of the mind than as the free expression and embodiment of human subjectivity. For the early Hegel, the alienated or “unhappy” consciousness is related to an Other by which it is passively determined, not freely expressed, because the relationship between self and Other can never become *self-conscious*.⁴⁶ In his essay “The Positivity of the Christian Religion” (1795–96), for example, Hegel presents a critical analysis of the conflict between the philosophy of human freedom developed by the Enlightenment and the institutional and doctrinal form of German Protestantism in his time. However, his concern is not only to expose the cultural divorce between secular reason and the received forms of Lutheran religious practice and doctrine. In “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate” (1798–1800), he warns against an alienation which he sees as latent in the Enlightenment idea of reason itself. The Protestant Enlightenment’s piecemeal rejection of religious tradition and community, Hegel argues, can lead to an apparently “rational” ideal of conduct which is just as alien to the needs of human selfhood. The ethical and religious ideal of the Kantian rationalist can be as much an idol as the graven image of the Siberian shaman.⁴⁷ Both are defined in relation to an Other which can be overcome only by domi-

nation: in the one case the reflective intelligence which the idolatrous worshipper can never express, in the other the emotions, sensuality, and need for cultural identity which the “enlightened” Christian has to suppress. The Other remains an *object*, whether of knowledge or worship; it therefore constrains rather than enables the expression of human subjectivity.

This self-division (*Entzweiung*) is the source of the need for philosophy as Hegel understands it at the beginning of his philosophical career.⁴⁸ Philosophy, for Hegel, is a discipline which is neither dominated by nor seeks to dominate its object, because its purpose is to mediate the free play of self-conscious intelligence with the really existing forms of human culture.

Unlike Enlightenment rationalism, however, Hegelian philosophy must think through, not just about, the world of concrete human experience of which “art” and “religion” are two of the most powerful expressions. In order to do so credibly, however, philosophy in the Hegelian mode must be both culturally and epistemologically fully reflective. Unlike religion and art, it cannot rest content with a mode of knowledge which remains partially implicit in an objective cultural medium. In his seminal essay *Faith and Knowledge* (1802), therefore, Hegel explicitly distinguishes speculative philosophy from both art and theology as the only way for the modern consciousness to be reconciled to religious faith. Indeed, as the close of the essay with its reference to a speculative Good Friday (*spekulativer Charfreitag*) makes clear, Hegel considers this specifically philosophical reconciliation to be a religious act.⁴⁹

What we call Hegel’s philosophical system is certainly conceived as a means of such reconciliation and so of overcoming the self-division which he perceives in the culture of his age. In our own very different age, a key question for both philosophy and theology remains one about the link between otherness (or difference) and domination. But now the question, far from being resolved by the radically autonomous and self-reflective discourse which is what Hegel means by philosophy, challenges the very idea of philosophy as an autonomous discipline of thought. For many postmodern thinkers, philosophical reason itself can be an agent of domination because of its potential to reduce the Other to the same: a reduction which can resemble violence.⁵⁰ In the work of Emmanuel Levinas, for example, the true idea of infinity must always be radically opposed to that of totality in the Hegelian sense.⁵¹ The task of philosophy is to remain absolutely open to its ultimate Other, while the key principle of ethics is radically to acknowledge the Other and to enable the Other to speak.⁵² Most relevantly to our present theme, Rowan Williams has argued that the idea of the soul in the Christian tradition implies a theology of the “therapeutic Other,” which requires an aesthetic or “iconic” mode of commu-

nication.⁵³ For Williams, being a soul means “letting go of a possessed and defended image of the moral self, abstractly free (and) self-nurturing.”⁵⁴ To do so we must be related to an Other which can never become the object, nor be the subject, of domination. As Williams writes:

Thus there is in reality no self—and no possibility of recognising what one is as a self—without the presence of the Other. But that other must precisely be other—not the fulfilment of what I think I want, the answer to my lack.⁵⁵

In psychotherapy, the analyst must *represent* but never claim to embody the Other. To make that claim would be to suggest that there is really an “Other” which could satisfy our desire for domination. But this abstract Other can never really exist; indeed, belief in it is the source of the system of illusion in which the patient is gripped. The task of the analyst, therefore, is to disclose the possibility of a relationship to a real Other which is truly different. To do so she must first expose the realm of false difference for what it is: the self’s projection and experience of the world as the abstract object of its spiritual or physical desire.

For Williams, this transformation of the self is what Christian discourse means by the relationship of the soul to God. Such an idea of human selfhood runs radically counter to the instrumental reason and mechanized practice of modernity. But this possibility is intimately related to our experience of religious, especially iconic, art. The icon is a picture which represents, but can never embody, the spiritual sphere to which it bears witness. It is an aid to worship only because it points to a realm *beyond* itself. It engages our subjectivity, but is not the product of that subjectivity alone. Indeed, Williams argues, in Byzantine icons light and perspective have their source within the picture and so can be said to focus or “bear down” on their beholder as well as the converse. We can speak of “being read” by icons as much as we “read” them. In Williams’s words, “the person looking at the icon is invited to let go of being an agent observing a motionless phenomenon.”⁵⁶ Icons take us out of ourselves as minds conscious of an external object and into ourselves as contemplative souls. The capacity of a religious painting to do this is well brought out by Henri Nouwen’s study of Rembrandt’s *The Prodigal Son*, to which Williams also refers. As Nouwen shows, the particular power of the painting derives from its capacity to absorb the gaze and consciousness of the viewer from several different perspectives: to see his or her self as each of the chief characters in the story.⁵⁷

If we take Williams’s account seriously, we cannot understand religious painting as the sensuous embodiment of a spiritual idea in the

Hegelian sense. Such painting does not enable us to behold (*anschauen*) an idea in sensuous form; nor can an idea be said to appear in and through such a form. But it is representation (*Vorstellung*) in the Hegelian sense, both because it “stands before” a spiritual truth which is always *beyond* its sensuous form and because it engages, from several different perspectives, the contemplative interpretation of the viewer. Hegel describes painting as a form “which converts the external shape entirely into an expression of the inner life.” But this means precisely that it can express the *relationship* of human subjectivity to God, in which God never becomes an object of consciousness and thus remains truly and creatively Other:

Its object, therefore, is no longer God as God, as the *object* of human consciousness, but his consciousness itself: God either in his actual life of subjectively living action and suffering, or as the spirit of the community, spirit with a sense of itself, mind in its privation, its sacrifice, or its blessedness and joy in life and activity in the midst of the existing world.⁵⁸

Like Williams’s account of icons and Nouwen’s discussion of Rembrandt’s *Prodigal Son*, Hegel’s discussion relates this capacity of painting to express the relationship of the self (and the religious community) to God to the way painting, unlike sculpture, has its source of light *within* itself.

Rowan Williams’s argument about the modern relevance of aesthetic to religious communication takes seriously Hegel’s insight into the particular way in which aesthetic and philosophical truth differ in the modern age. But it also suggests an understanding of modern art very different from Hegel’s idea of the “dissolution of the romantic form of art.” For Williams, religious art in modernity enables a resistance, not a reduction, of consciousness to the disembodied play of subjectivity which our modern cultural situation can entail. In art, in other words, we can become aware of what Williams calls “the Other beyond Violence”: the Other which we can apprehend only by acknowledging it as something other than the object of our reflection.⁵⁹ *Vorstellung*, for Hegel, is neither pure mimesis nor pure imagination. It is a form of representation which necessarily also implies the self-interrogation of human subjectivity. It is therefore equally relevant to religious and aesthetic consciousness.

For Hegel, the art (especially the painting) of the Christian era is distinguished by its ability to articulate human subjectivity in this way. What Hegel sees as different about modern (i.e., postromantic) art is that now art has become *culturally autonomous* and therefore cognitively inadequate in relation to philosophy. Modern interpreters of Hegel, however, have often emphasized Hegel’s *negative* judgment about the cognitive deficit

of modern art while tending to ignore his *positive* one about its cultural autonomy. This emphasis often derives from a particular reading of Hegel's thesis about the primacy of philosophical conceptualization over aesthetic communication. George Pattison, for example, translates the Hegelian term *Anschaung* as "representation" (and *Vorstellung* as "picture-thinking"), and argues that Hegel's idea of the philosophical concept as the highest form of knowledge implies a view of artistic form as an "illusion," even a "lie."⁶⁰ But this is simply wrong. Hegel explicitly characterizes art as a form of knowledge: it is "an immediate and therefore *sensuous* knowing, a knowing in the form and shape of the sensuous and objective itself, in which the Absolute is presented to contemplation and feeling."⁶¹ Hegel's thesis of the "end of art" does not derive from a view of art as the sphere of illusion or even imagination. On the contrary, it is a consequence of his idea of art as a mode of absolute spirit, which leads him to believe that art is inadequate to the full truth of modernity. The real problem is not that Hegel views art as *unphilosophical* and therefore inadequate. It is that Hegel's account of art as part of his speculative system has tended, for many modern scholars, to obscure the relevance to Hegel's thought as a whole of the cultural situation of modern art which he so clearly sees.

Theodor Adorno, for example, argues in his *Aesthetic Theory* as follows:

Hegel's philosophy fails in relation to the beautiful: because he equates reason and reality. . . . He hypostasizes the structuring of all being by subjectivity as the Absolute. He regards the nonidentical solely as a fetter on subjectivity, instead of determining the experience of nonidentity as the telos of the aesthetic subject, as its emancipation.⁶²

Similarly, Andrew Bowie argues that Hegel's philosophy of modern art fails because his thought is ultimately not concerned with the particular and the contingent self, but rather with the integration of individual experience into an overarching narrative of the progress of spirit. Indeed, for Bowie, Hegel's philosophical marginalization of art itself reflects the marginalization of individual experience in modernity which makes Hegel's thesis of the "end of art" appear coherent.⁶³

I want to argue exactly the reverse. In his book *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor argues persuasively that the Enlightenment's decoupling of metaphysical and theological truth from particular and therefore contingent historical events means that the sphere of "ordinary," individual experience becomes more, not less, culturally important.⁶⁴ In modernity, ultimate truth can be validated only by universal reason, not the evidence of particular historical events. But this decoupling means that the whole

sphere of ordinary experience—the experience of particular selves in the world—becomes meaningful on its own terms. This new kind of meaning, Taylor shows, is often articulated in *aesthetic* terms: for example, in the rise of realism in painting and the European novel, and the expression of Protestant spirituality in the concern of the Dutch masters with domestic life.⁶⁵ As we have seen, Hegel's *Aesthetics* offers many illuminating insights into just these aspects of the culture of modernity. But readings which approach the *Aesthetics* via Hegel's system as a whole all too often dismiss those insights as marginal.

How then should we read Hegel's *Aesthetics* now? Nearly two centuries after Hegel's death, we need to pay greater attention to the relative autonomy of Hegel's philosophy of art. That philosophy suggests *cultural* insights which cannot automatically be integrated within, and therefore have a critical and dialectical function in relation to, the total speculative framework of his thought. Because of that autonomy, Hegel's philosophy of art continues to be relevant to our own very different cultural situation. Only in the light of that autonomous potential can we understand the link between Hegel's philosophy of art and his philosophy of religion. For Hegel's religious thought, too, remains relevant only if it is reinterpreted in relation to both his speculative system and the continuing experience of modernity which that system offers to describe.

We need to relate to modernity both the originality of Hegel's account of representation and the idea of human selfhood from which that account flows. As Gillian Rose⁶⁶ and Rowan Williams⁶⁷ have argued from two very different perspectives, Hegel's idea of philosophy as radically self-conscious reason implies an ultimately religious doctrine of the self. As Williams writes, Hegel's idea of speculative philosophy can, without any confusion of discourses, be described as "the assimilation of the process of thinking to love."⁶⁸ Yet Hegel's own thought, because of its totalizing and systematic aspect, can also threaten the integrity of the self in the sense which Williams outlines. For Hegel's philosophy, if we read it only as philosophy, can acknowledge "difference" only in a philosophical mode. Hegel's thought is not immune to the destructive connection between reason and violence: the power of reason to reduce the Other to the same.

But to read Hegel appropriately is to do more than grasp a philosophy, especially a philosophy of art or religion. It is to engage with the present reality of the spheres of human experience which the words "art" and "religion" mean. When we do so, we encounter in Hegel's thought itself a principle of resistance to its own totalizing claims. That principle becomes manifest in both aesthetic and religious terms because speculative reason, when it engages with the actuality of aesthetic and religious experience, *itself reveals and indeed engenders the autonomous power of the sphere*

of representation. We need now to think through an encounter between the speculative framework of Hegel's thought and the aesthetic and religious experience of our own postmodern, but also post-Hegelian, world. To do so is to discover that, for Hegel, pace Adorno, the "experience of non-identity" is *not* a "fetter on subjectivity" but rather the "emancipation of the aesthetic subject."

Such a reading will inevitably "go beyond" Hegel's own philosophical definition of modernity. But this, I think, is what the logic of Hegel's doctrine of embodied spirit now requires. When Hegel was writing, neither "realism" nor "modernism" had fully emerged in either art or theology. His account of the fate of both art and religion in his age in terms of a certain critique of Romanticism reflects both the actual situation of art and theology in early nineteenth-century Europe, and an emphasis on the primacy of philosophy in modernity which, Hegel believed, that very situation made urgently necessary. But Hegel's modernity is not our own. The most important point of reference now for both art and theology is the legacy not of Romanticism, but of modernism. For the theorist of the classical realist novel like Lukács,⁶⁹ or of modern realist painting like Baudelaire,⁷⁰ the "transcendental homelessness"⁷¹ of post-Romantic culture was expressed in art and literature by the realist concern to represent the epic totality of the modern historical world: one in which particular people and events, in their very particularity, embody the spirit of the modern age. Classical realism was not the negation of romanticism but its natural successor, capable of expressing what is "epic" or "heroic" in modernity by creatively connecting the subjectivity of artists to the objective world of human experience which their art represents.⁷² For modernism, on the other hand, the whole of modern experience can only be represented in and through the aesthetic fragment, the very incompleteness of which bears witness to a truth which is reflected through, yet never fully embodied in, the mode of its representation.⁷³ Aesthetic representation has become a problem in itself. It is to this situation that what is called "postmodernism" responds. For the postmodernist, the difference between representation and substance pertains not just to aesthetic communication, but to philosophical and theological truth. As Walter Davis⁷⁴ has shown, Hegel's phenomenology of the self—a theology of personhood which turns decisively on the problem of representation—shows us why the *experience* of that difference is intrinsic to our becoming human persons as such.⁷⁵ In other words, it is a difference that must be philosophically comprehended precisely because it can never be existentially removed.

This insight is especially relevant because the modern critical re-

ception of Hegel is now less concerned with defending the systematic coherence of Hegel's thought than with highlighting its potential to illuminate real—and really different—spheres of human cultural and ethical life. In the age of postmodernity we do not need to read Hegel contra Hegel, but rather to highlight a creative tension in his thought which has been obscured both by the cultural context in which it was written and by the interests of knowledge which have informed its reception. Hegel's systematic account of the primacy of philosophy in relation to aesthetic and religious knowledge neither cancels out, nor simply contradicts, his philosophical insights into religious and aesthetic experience. Rather, the tension between the two kinds of insight in Hegel's thought requires a different kind of overcoming today: one which acknowledges the culturally actual difference between those spheres of experience not beside, but *in* Hegel's speculative synthesis.

For Hegel, particularity is the bridge to appearance, indeed revelation, in both art and religion. Both are distinguished from philosophy because they communicate truth in a particular, concrete, and determinate way which can never wholly be reflected by philosophical thought. For this reason art and religion both need, and are profoundly relevant to, philosophy. Hegel argues both that modern philosophy brings about in art and religion a loss of particularity, with destructive consequences for modern culture as a whole; and that the modern fate of art and religion is a necessary, meaningful, and ultimately even redemptive one. We can perhaps understand this paradox more fully two centuries after Hegel's death. For now particularity has become a scandal in philosophy itself. Postmodernism emphasizes both the interpenetration of philosophical, theological, and aesthetic discourse and the plurality of different and incompatible *cultural* discourses. This has led to a radical skepticism about the capacity of any philosophy to mediate between such traditions.⁷⁶ For any philosophy must necessarily construct its own culturally specific discourse about what Reason and its Other are. Hegel's philosophy, precisely because of its ambition to communicate systematic and presuppositionless knowledge, is especially vulnerable to the charge. But it also contains within itself a principle of its own defense which is profoundly relevant now. The Hegelian tradition can only be credibly communicated and defended now by a discourse which *shows* the difference between Hegel's idea of speculative philosophy and its historically actual Other. The aesthetic and religious dimensions in Hegel's thought are intrinsically related because they are both part of that discourse. In Hegel art and religion, each in their different way, acknowledge the Other because they redeem the self.

Notes

References to Hegel's *Aesthetics* are to G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), hereafter abbreviated as *A*; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), hereafter abbreviated as *VA*. The latter work comprises vols. 13, 14, and 15 of G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–70), hereafter cited as *Werke*.

1. Hegel, *A* 1:101/*VA* 1:139–40. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 293–302; Hegel, *Werke* 10:367–77 (paragraphs 556–71).

2. Hegel, *A* 1:10–11/*VA* 1:24–26.

3. Hegel, *A* 1:10–11/*VA* 1:24–26. As Wolf Lepenies has shown, Hegel does not mean that aesthetic consciousness can be replaced by philosophy in the modern age, but rather that the centrality to modernity of philosophical *knowledge* entails a radical change in the function and significance of art. Art does not cease to be, but rather ceases to be self-sufficient, in the modern age. See Wolf Lepenies, *Aufstieg und Fall der Intellektuellen in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1992), 84–86.

4. Hegel, *A* 1:11, 102–4/*VA* 1:25, 141–43. I translate *Vorstellung* as “representation” (not, as in Knox’s version, as “pictorial thinking”) because the meaning of the German word is not restricted to visual art. It also connotes “imagination,” even “idea”: the mental representation of an object which cannot be fully grasped conceptually.

5. Hegel, *A* 1:104–5/*VA* 1:143–44.

6. Geuss’s argument about Hegel’s philosophy of art applies equally to his philosophy of religion. See Raymond Geuss, *Morality, Culture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 92–93.

7. Hegel, *A* 1:111/*VA* 1:151.

8. Hegel, *A* 1:8/*VA* 1:21.

9. Hegel, *A* 1:9/*VA* 1:22.

10. See Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933), 350 (*A* 377).

11. Hegel, *A* 1:75/*VA* 1:106.

12. Hegel, *A* 1:11/*VA* 1:25.

13. Hegel, *A* 1:603ff./*VA* 2:232–33.

14. Hegel, *A* 1:103/*VA* 1:143.

15. Hegel, *A* 1:524–25/*VA* 2:136.

16. Hegel, *A* 1:525/*VA* 2:138.

17. Hegel, *A* 1:595–96/*VA* 2:221–22.

18. Friedrich Theodore Vischer, *Ästhetik, oder die Wissenschaft des Schönen*, ed. Robert Vischer, 6 vols. (1922–23; Hildesheim: Olms, 1996), 3:97ff.

19. Hegel, *A* 1:595–96/*VA* 2:221–22. For an exposition of the term *sermo humilis*, see Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 151ff.

20. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), 12; Hegel, *Werke* 7:27.

21. Hegel, *A* 1:96/*VA* 1:133.

22. Hegel, *A* 1:595/*VA* 2:222.

23. Hegel, *A* 1:574–75/*VA* 2:196–97.

24. For characteristic examples of Hegel's use of the term *Vorstellung* in his *Philosophy of Religion*, see G. W. F. Hegel: *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition: The Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 144–51 (hereafter abbreviated as *PR*); Hegel, *Werke* 16:139–51. The Suhrkamp *Werke* edition of Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion* is based on the lectures of 1831, so the English and German texts will not always exactly correspond.

25. Hegel, *A* 1:103/*VA* 1:142.

26. Hegel, *A* 1:100/*VA* 1:138.

27. Hegel, *A* 1:96–97/*VA* 1:133.

28. Hegel, *A* 1:100/*VA* 1:139.

29. Hegel, *A* 1:100/*VA* 1:139. See also Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 292; Hegel, *Werke* 10:366 (paragraph 554).

30. For a persuasive account of both the difference and the relationship between philosophical and religious language in Hegel, see John McCumber, *The Company of Words: Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 54–56.

31. Hegel, *PR* 78n6; Hegel, *Werke*, 16:28.

32. Hegel, *PR* 80–81; Hegel, *Werke*, 16:16–18.

33. Hegel, *PR* 89–90; Hegel, *Werke*, 16:52–53.

34. Hegel, *PR* 91n41; Hegel, *Werke*, 16:53.

35. The text of these lectures is available in German in the Suhrkamp edition, but not in Peter Hodgson's English edition of the *Philosophy of Religion*, which is based on the 1827 manuscript. The following references are therefore to the Suhrkamp (*Werke*) edition alone; the translations are my own.

36. Hegel, *Werke*, 17:342–44.

37. *Ibid.*

38. For a more extended discussion of this passage in relation to Hegel's thought as a whole, see Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Athlone, 1981), 112–20. See also John Walker, "The Concept of Revelation and Hegel's Historical Realism," *Hegel-Studien* 24 (1989): 79–96.

39. Hegel, *Werke*, 17:339–40.

40. *Ibid.*, 17:342.

41. Hegel, *PR* 84; Hegel, *Werke*, 16:48. The analogy with knowledge of the historical fate of a painting is made only in the 1831 manuscript which is included in the *Werke* edition.

42. See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, ed. C. J. Friedrich, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 415–16.

43. Hegel, *PR* 455; Hegel, *Werke*, 17:274.

44. Hegel, *A* 1:10/*VA* 1:25.

45. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 11; Hegel, *Werke*, 7:26.

46. For a more extended discussion of this concept, see G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (London: Macmillan, 1931), 251–67; Hegel, *Werke*, 3:163–77.

47. G. W. F. Hegel, “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate,” in G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox, ed. Richard Kroner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 211; Hegel, *Werke*, 1:323.

48. G. W. F. Hegel, “On the Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy” (1801), in Hegel, *Werke*, 2:20.

49. Hegel, *Werke*, 2:432–33.

50. For a classic statement of this view, see Jacques Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” in J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, ed. and trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), 79–153.

51. See Emmanuel Levinas, “Metaphysics and Transcendence,” in *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 33–52.

52. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 64–81. See also Julia Kristeva, “Might Not Universality Be . . . Our Own Foreignness?” in *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 169–95.

53. Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons* (London: Continuum, 2001), 184ff.

54. Williams, *Lost Icons*, 228.

55. *Ibid.*, 188.

56. *Ibid.*, 226.

57. See Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Meditation on Fathers, Brothers, and Sons* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992).

58. Hegel, *A* 2:625–26/ *VA* 2:259–60.

59. Williams, *Lost Icons*, 228.

60. George Pattison, *Art, Modernity, and Faith: Towards a Theology of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 137–38.

61. Hegel, *A* 1:101/ *VA* 1:139.

62. Theodor Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 119.

63. Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 144.

64. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 274ff.

65. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 287ff.

66. Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 92ff.

67. See Rowan Williams, “Hegel and the Gods of Postmodernity,” in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, ed. Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick (London: Routledge, 1992), 72–80.

68. Rowan Williams, “Logic and Spirit in Hegel,” in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Philip Blond (London: Routledge, 1998), 127. See also Hegel, *PR* 418; Hegel, *Werke*, 17:221–22.

69. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (London: Merlin, 1971), 70ff.

70. See C. Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques: L’art romantique et autres oeuvres*

critiques, ed. Henri Lemaitre (Paris: Éditions Garnier, 1962), 102–5 (Salon de 1856: 2: “Qu’est-ce que le romantisme?”).

71. Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, 41.

72. Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques*, 195 (Salon de 1846: 18: “De l’héroïsme de la vie moderne”); see also 503 (16: “L’art philosophique”).

73. For a seminal discussion of this aesthetic mode in modernist poetry, see J. P. Stern’s discussion of Rilke in Stern’s *The Dear Purchase: A Theme in German Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 254–304.

74. See Walter A. Davis, *Inwardness and Existence: Subjectivity in/and Hegel, Heidegger, Marx and Freud* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 93–106.

75. Davis, *Inwardness and Existence*, 105.

76. For a summary of this debate from a German perspective, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Liberating Power of Symbols: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 1–45.

The “Religion of Art”

Rüdiger Bubner

Introduction

Hegel put forward a threefold theory of the Absolute that no longer has anything to do with the old theological speculations concerning the Trinity. The Absolute shows itself as art, religion, and philosophy, with no hierarchical order governing these standpoints; only an increase in transparency permits distinctions to be drawn between them. As a matter of fact, art had been viewed in association with philosophy since Plato. Moreover, it had been seen as philosophy's rival. This path, which led right up to the Renaissance, was then turned in a more subjective direction by the modern concentration on art criticism. Kant's aesthetics forms the high point of this development. The analysis of aesthetic judgments (*Geschmacksurteile*) systematically displaces the idea of beauty. It deals instead with the special reaction of a subject to aesthetic experience.

Platonism, meanwhile, continued to exercise a subterranean effect in the eighteenth century from Shaftesbury to Hemsterhuis and at the very end of the century celebrated its resurrection. The precocious Schelling had already studied Plato before he was confronted with Fichte's principle of subjectivity.¹ In the “Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism,” dated to the year 1796, we see a trio of friends from Tübingen with a significant future at the start of their journey. Together they pursue the aim of overcoming Kant's critical restrictions on reason, and at the center of this endeavor stands an appeal to Plato's idea of beauty.² At about the same time, under the leadership of Friedrich Schlegel, the early Romantics discover the inspiration of Plato. Schleiermacher's masterful translation of Plato's dialogues into German represents the enduring result.

And what about religion? To note just one subsidiary aspect of the intellectual development in the Theological Seminary at Tübingen, the hotheads, Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin, encounter there an educational establishment that tries to defend the old dogmatism of theology with modern means, namely, with concepts borrowed from Kant's moral philosophy. In particular, the writings of the young Hegel attest to the

power of a conception of religion that sees in Christianity a superior religion of love waiting to be reawakened despite Christianity's degeneration into a theoretical edifice and into practical coercion in the institutions of the church. The living content of religion is to be preserved for the future through philosophy's engagement with theology.

Overlooking the whole scene, we see philosophy, from which the post-Kantian generation as a whole expected subversive reform, working hand in hand with aesthetics and religion to release the modern culture of reflection from its self-certainty. On the one hand, the project of producing a definitively valid system makes use of the intuition of the beautiful to lead immediacy beyond immediacy.³ On the other hand, revealed religion acts as a stimulus to disclose the authentic "manifestation" of the Absolute to the spirit of the community of the faithful. Finally, philosophy attains the status of absolute knowing, which is more than just the eternal "longing for knowledge" insofar as spirit occupies itself with itself as the comprehensively developed content of knowledge.

It is in this sense that Hegel united the triad of aesthetics, religion, and philosophy in his systematic outline, the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. This solution represents the result of Hegel's efforts toward completing a closed system, at the beginning of which had stood the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Between the two books lies a decade of growing maturity (Jena 1806–Heidelberg 1817). The vanishing point of the phenomenological development through the historical appearances of spirit is formed by "absolute knowing," which finally emerges from art and religion. While Hegel's whole system rests on the ground of absolute knowing that has been prepared by phenomenology, it is clear that the path of phenomenology itself indicates a quite distinctive treatment of the phenomena by the Concept—one that should not be confused with the encyclopedic presentation of all relevant content of knowledge in the system proper.⁴ Shortly before the end of the path of phenomenology there appears, under the heading "Religion of Art" (*Kunstreligion*), a distinctive version of aesthetics that Hegel never repeated. It is to this special treatment that I want to draw attention. Let us consider *Kunstreligion* more closely.

Art's Position in the *Phenomenology*

The term "religion of art" appears in Hegel's work only in the penultimate chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As far as I can tell, it has not been borrowed from any other author, though naturally early idealism, with its reminiscence of the beautiful world of the Greeks in Schiller, Hölderlin,

and Schelling, exhibits a whole range of echoes.⁵ Hegel evidently coined the term on the basis of his background historical studies in cultural history. He inserted it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* at a point that must be determined quite precisely.

The position at which the religion of art belongs can certainly be understood.⁶ Yet it appears that in combining religion and aesthetics—and thereby mirroring Greek culture—Hegel addressed a problem that was not completely resolved. At least, the later ordering of the respective realms in the *Encyclopaedia*⁷ and the *Aesthetics*⁸ looks different. In what follows here, however, I will not attempt to draw any conclusions from these philological and developmental observations. There is no lack of genealogical studies of Hegel's work.⁹ My aim is a different one.

What strikes one first of all is that the ordering of shapes in the *Phenomenology* is at odds with the factual chronological sequence. The initial chapters deal with elementary stances of consciousness that cannot be assigned to any one epoch: do they belong to the pre-Socratics or to classical empiricism? With the attainment of self-consciousness, however, the signature of the modern world first becomes evident, though the constellations of stoicism, skepticism, and the Christian “unhappy consciousness” incorporate quotations that reach far back into the history of philosophy. With the chapter on reason the account turns toward the spacious fresco of the modern world that stretches from the rise of science across numerous forms of ideology to its culmination in Kantianism.

Ignoring all historicity, the following chapter, “Spirit,” brings before our eyes the ethical world of the Greeks, which then becomes alienated from itself in a historical macroprocess that leads via the Enlightenment (here called “Culture”) to the events of the French Revolution. The end of this process is represented once again by Kantianism, together with the romantic symptoms of the latter's dissolution. This extremely abstract overview of the conceptual progress of the *Phenomenology* no doubt leaves all material intuitions and derivations to one side. But it brings us to the threshold of Hegel's identification of religion with art, which is what concerns us here.

In the preceding chapters, “Consciousness” and “Self-Consciousness,” religious moments certainly appeared under the banner of the “super-sensuous” and the “unhappy consciousness.” Reason, on the other hand, “and its peculiar shapes, have no religion, because the self-consciousness of them knows or seeks *itself* in the *immediate* present.”¹⁰ In short, the modern era is, in its structure, a-religious. Moreover, starting from the premises of the modern era, this deficiency can in no way be remedied. Another path must therefore be taken, which reconciles self-certain subjectivity with the whole richness of the world, and in such a way that forms of life actually emerge from this reconciliation.

This attempt is undertaken in the chapter on "Spirit," which embroils itself in the dialectic of a development from the substance of the ethical life of the polis to the reciprocal recognition of subjects in a collective *We*. With this recognition, however, we have not reached the end point of the whole process by which spirit mediates itself with itself by means of all its appearances. Rather, the communication between equals transforms itself astonishingly into a new opposition. This holds between, on the one hand, the equals who unite with one another in communication, and, on the other, the principle of their unification. "The reconciling *Yea*, in which the two 'I's let go their antithetical *existence*, is the *existence* of the 'I' which has expanded into a duality . . . : it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge" (PG 494/PS 409).

Let us cast an eye for a moment on the philosophical situation today. The current rationalist *theory of communication*, which confesses to belonging to the "postmetaphysical" age, ends with the ideal social contract of a universally distributed subjectivity. This is how Hegel's dialectic has been adapted from Habermas to Fukuyama. By contrast, Hegel himself makes use of a *religious* formula, according to which God is present in the midst of his community. The process of constituting the unity of subjects is thus not entrusted to the cooperation of separate instantiations of the "I" who must remain separate in order to cooperate at all. Rather, the sense of community in the form of life based on mutual recognition is attributed to the presence of a binding and reconciling principle. The spiritual power that guides intersubjectivity points to something more than the existence of an "I" expanded into duality. Strictly speaking, such "multiplication" exceeds the possibilities of subjectivity. Where two are united with one another, God is at work "in their midst." Accordingly, concrete historical togetherness is called the appearance of God on earth.

At this point the chapter on "Religion" begins, which, like all previous shapes and forms of the appearance of spirit, reconstructs dialectically an essential dimension of our prephilosophical understanding of ourselves and our relation to the world. Most cultures know religion. For this reason, philosophy has spoken for a long time of "natural religion." However, to natural religion Hegel opposes, in systematic abstraction, an "artificial religion" (PG 502/PS 416). From this opposition there arises, finally, "art-religion" (*die Kunst-Religion*), which, in the title of the corresponding section, connects art and religion with a hyphen.¹¹ In this way, the synthetic character of the subject matter, and accordingly its philosophical foundation, are already made known in the external presentation.

Art-religion stands in the middle between natural and revealed religion. It thus supplements the traditional dualism in an innovative way. The old distinction holds between the "heathen" and what is "revealed" in

the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to the customary conception, alongside the anthropologically explicable inclination of the human soul toward the Divine, there existed the authentic self-disclosure of the Absolute in monotheism.¹² Between both sides there obtained a deep chasm. Naïve polytheism and the making known of God in the Word and in the deeds of Christ did not converge at all. Christianity lived in the certainty that it monopolized the essence of religion. Its accompanying sense of superiority fueled the struggle against the heathen and legitimated the mission to convert unbelievers.

Hegel systematically subverts this simple antithesis between natural and revealed religion. Natural religion, for example, believes in the “Light-being” (*das Lichtwesen*), in the pantheism of “plant and animal,” as well as the “artificer” (*Werkmeister*) as a kind of demiurgic creator (PG 508–12/PS 421–24). These forms are to be assigned to the ancient Orient, and on no account should they be confused with Greek theology, which, in contrast to the intuitive clarity and vividness of the preclassical period, chooses an explicitly *aesthetic* vanishing point. The contrast could not be greater. For the transition from Oriental images to the characteristic religion of art of the Greeks is achieved by virtue of the fact that the “instinctive labor” of the demiurge proceeds to a shaping and fashioning that is born out of thought and is in conformity with thought in its results. Aesthetic production announces itself for the first time with the dictum: “Spirit is an artist” (PG 512/PS 424).

Aesthetics After Kant

Though spirit is an artist, we have not yet by any means left the realm of religion. The autonomy of the aesthetic, which is a modern discovery, must thus be kept apart from the tableau of a religion of art. The path toward the autonomy of the aesthetic had been prepared by Kant’s analysis of the judgment of taste in his *Critique of Judgment*, which maintained only weak connections to the spheres of the other two *Critiques*, namely *epistemology* and *moral philosophy*. The early idealism that followed on from Kant had chosen precisely this well-advanced bastion for its point of attack against Kant’s system. The common credo contended that, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant had gone far beyond his self-chosen limits, or at least further than was apparent to Kant himself. It is worthwhile considering the consequences for a moment.

The previously mentioned “Earliest System-Programme” of 1796, which bundles together the anticipatory thoughts of Hölderlin, Schelling,

and Hegel into the project of systematically overcoming Kant's critical philosophy, invokes the help of the Platonic Idea to provide ultimate orientation for the task of achieving synthetic unification. Quite contrary to the tendency of the time, the very young Schelling had brought Plato into the discussion. We now see this more clearly thanks to the inspection of Schelling's posthumous works, which provide information on the formative period before his first public appearance as an author following in the steps of Fichte.¹³ The middle-period Schelling had then progressed a good deal in the effort to bring a philosophy of the identity of objectivity and subjectivity—of nature and spirit—to an articulation that was previously unheard of and that transcended Spinozism. The so-called identity-philosophy of 1800 employs art as the organon of philosophy, to the extent that the thinking of unification that eliminates all differences can no longer be adequately thematized in thought alone. Art helps out in philosophy's moment of need by rendering genuinely intuitable the amalgamation of objectivity and subjectivity, because the unity of every beautiful work of art fuses matter and form indistinguishably. In the sequence of drafts after 1800, Schelling again and again worked toward his systematic goal by associating art and philosophy.

Yet at the summit of speculative thought that had now been reached, religion was left behind. It evidently belonged to the lost world of the Greeks, which served as a paradigm for the early idealists but was clearly imagined and lamented as something past.¹⁴ Only the late Schelling, who triumphed after Hegel's death, reverted to a "philosophy of mythology and revelation" that explored the rationality in both the Greek world and Christianity to the same degree.

After this short survey, let us now turn back to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. A decade after the "Earliest System-Programme," the author of the *Phenomenology* takes up the thread again precisely where it had been left. It is now no longer a matter of pondering the paradox of a long-gone cultural unity. Viewed historically, this unity of the Greek world had fallen prey to the inexorable process of alienation. At most, therefore, it provides a model for the projection of a *future* philosophical establishing of unity that is to overcome the entrenched Kantian dualism. In this way the mature Hegel, who appeared on the scene with his first book late enough in 1806, broke decisively with the philosophical friend of his youth, Hölderlin, and the latter's sentimental enthusiasm for the Greeks.

However, Hegel also draws a line between himself and Schelling, with whose systematic attempts he had sympathized in his Jena years. The preface to the *Phenomenology* refuses all the enthusiastic assurances of Schelling's philosophy of identity. Instead, the *Phenomenology* reconstructs the sequence of historical shapes of spirit and bases their coming-to-be on

a logic that is dialectical in character. To this extent the *Phenomenology* is not itself to be regarded as Hegel's system, but only as its "preparation" (*Vorbereitung*), as Hegel explicitly explains (*PG* 32, 38/*PS* 16, 20). This special position of the phenomenological enterprise allows for the intimate interweaving of history and metaphysics. Indeed, the historicizing approach is what distinguishes Hegel from all early idealism after Kant.

When one considers the matter this way, there is no problem in the fact that the religion of art appears in penultimate place, before the conclusion of the phenomenological journey which, taken as a whole, ends with "absolute knowing." Nor does the fact that the religion of art is unambiguously related to the Greek world detract from the validity of the analysis. For Hegel is not doing historiography here. From the perspective of phenomenology, the component parts of a system that ties together all relevant insights are consciously discussed and organized *after* having been historically presorted. For this reason, the built-in anachronisms that we have already observed carry no weight. In place of a history of philosophical teachings and dogmas, the material aspects—in other words, "chapters" such as Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, Reason, and Spirit—are accorded their place in the genealogy. And this happens precisely because the historical path of a systematic philosophy, which is mediated by its own history, is clarified through phenomenological means.

In so doing Hegel pursues the strategy of developing in parallel the "in itself or for us" and the "for itself." The phenomenological observer gains a fundamentally different perspective on the shapes of consciousness—a perspective that belongs to their respective self-understanding but is never affirmed by them. What is "for us" in the shapes distinguishes itself constantly and necessarily from the knowledge they possess of themselves. Each position combines for itself the truth—that is, what it knows—with certainty—that is, the insistence on the unparalleled validity of its point of view. It falls to the phenomenological observer to reflect on the specific form taken by the discrepancy between truth and certainty in order then to motivate the relevant appearance of spirit to carry out this reflection itself. The anticipation by the observer of such a step of reflection drives forward the immanent reflection of the historical shape itself, and in such a way that, out of the immanent reconstruction in the For-itself of that which the For-us already knew, there arises a change of shape, which in the language of phenomenology itself is called "experience [*Erfahrung*]" (*PG* 78–80/*PS* 55–56). In truth, this twofold change in the self-conception of the shapes, or parallelism in the movement of reflection that is both For-us and For-itself, provides the methodological impetus that causes phenomenology to progress.

The Political Character of the Religion of Art

This methodological consideration explains Hegel's indifference to the violation of chronological correctness. Yes, the religion of art is an invention of the Greeks, who emancipated themselves from the more natural representations found in the ancient Orient, but who had not yet attained the clarity of the act of revelation by the God who himself begins to speak of himself. In this respect, the religion of art stands as the crucial copula between the traditional alternatives of the natural and revelatory forms of religion. Above all, however, what is noticeable to the philosopher now about the religion of art is the fact that it confers on the religious, which is valued as the comprehensive existence of the unlimited spirit, a turn toward *self-consciousness*. Religion owes this moment of self-consciousness, of course, not to the address of an external God but to the aesthetic permeation of the material. The religion of art no longer makes use merely of natural givens, such as light, plants, and animals, or of an all-creating "artificer" (*Werkmeister*): in all these cases concrete, tangible representations are simply commandeered by religion. Aesthetic production rather transforms whatever is represented into something spiritual, thanks to the aesthetic medium which is neither completely bound to the material nor purely intellectual. The artist in his own right occupies an outstanding place between the worker, who remains tied to matter, and the thinker, who is independent of such ties and who reflects.

Now it is remarkable that this aesthetic quality at the same time allows the shape of the religion of art to be characterized *politically*. "[It] is the free people in whom custom constitutes the substance of all, whose actuality and existence each and everyone knows to be his own will and deed" (PG 512–13/PS 425). Aristotle had formulated the concept—effective for Europe—of a political constitution in which free and equal citizens together resolve the problem of order and domination. He had done so by establishing a seamless connection between the ethos, or value-laden, regular behavior of individuals, and the stability of the whole as a political entity with a standing of its own. What counts here is that the individual does not appear cut off from the polis. As far as political philosophy is concerned, Hegel always preferred the "substantial ethical life" of classical antiquity to the modern social contract targeted at individuals and their calculations of utility. And in the Berlin *Philosophy of Right* Hegel at last finds a way of combining ethical life with the subject's claims to freedom in a contemporary manner, without opting for the detour through the primary atomization of individuals to which a contractual bond be-

tween individuals corresponds. From the perspective of this end point of the Hegelian conceptual development, the judgment that the Greek life-world is simply past thus has to be relativized. For although, under the banner of the religion of art, phenomenology does indeed concern itself with a pre-Christian shape of spirit, it thereby brings to light a valid structure that *remains* authoritative.

The concept of the “spirit of a people” (*Volksgeist*), which Hegel acquired early on from Montesquieu, is crucial (see PG 516, 529/PS 428, 439). It finds employment in Voltaire’s cultural history in the phrase *esprit des nations*. One should, therefore, repudiate the prejudice, dear to critics of ideology and haunting the literature, that charges Hegel with harboring a romantic preference for the irrational in his consideration of history. On the contrary, the “spirit of a people” enjoys an impeccable Enlightenment reputation. If Hegel assigns to the religion of art the role of expressing “the clear, ethical spirits of self-conscious peoples” (PG 517/PS 428), his intention thereby is to locate a rational point of entry into world history at the level of states. The later lectures on the *Philosophy of History* argue in a quite similar way.¹⁵ The spirit of a people gains at least its initial self-consciousness through the powers of the aesthetic. For this reason, the religion of art is not merely something theological, nor merely aesthetic. In truth, the synthesis of art and religion is political.

After having determined what is at issue, let us follow a little the development of the matter itself in the *Phenomenology*. As the first, immediate product of artistic activity there appears the “sculpture”—the statue representing the god in an intuitable form. In the fully worked-out lectures on aesthetics, Hegel moves the classical statue as such into the center of the premodern conception of art. In the *Phenomenology* the situation is different, insofar as the artwork is in definite need of augmentation. The externalized and fashioned work of sculpture may be venerated in a religious manner by the admiring crowd or be understood and discussed by a public of connoisseurs. Both reactions show that the moment of self-consciousness stands over against the objectified work and remains external to it.

This observation necessitates the next dialectical step. The artwork demands yet a “higher element” of existence. This is *language*, which animates the silent sculpture. Into this position steps the “hymn,” which “ignites devotion in all” in a manner quite different from the contemplation of the thinglike work of art (PG 519/PS 430). Yet the actual unity of the two sides—the collaboration of artwork and language—is accomplished only in the cultic ritual or “cultus” (*Kultus*), which celebrates the divine’s becoming-present on earth. What realizes itself in the cultic “action” is the absolute spirit, to which the religion of art gives expression by organizing

the common life of the faithful as the interaction of the religious community (*Gemeinde*). All the participants of a religious act experience in the act and through the act the presence of God and confirm for themselves—right into the heart of their political identity—their higher recognition of the ethical form of life to which they belong: “a festival that is the honour of man” (*PG* 529/*PS* 439).

I shall leave to one side what Hegel says in connection with the determination of *political festivals*, which is surely inspired in part by the theatrical activities of the French Revolution. Hegel also discusses the art forms of the epic, tragedy, and comedy, but the secondary literature has commented enough on that. Hegel summarizes his exposition of the religion of art as follows:

Through the religion of art, Spirit has advanced from the form of *substance* to assume that of *subject*, for *it produces* its [outer] shape, thus making explicit in it the act, or the self-consciousness, that merely vanishes in the awful substance and does not apprehend its own self in its trust. (*PG* 545/*PS* 453)

The religion of art imparts to substantial ethical life a *self-relation* which raw substance, to which one adheres merely through trust, was not able to construct for itself. Yet this self-relation does not in any way favor individuality in the modern sense or the articulated “I” that sets itself over against substance in order to observe it or even dissolve it. It is precisely *substance* itself that gains a relation to itself in the mode of the aesthetic.

Throughout his whole career Hegel directed attention to such achievements of mediation. For in political festivals, which proceeded in the service of God from the religious cultus, the social unity celebrates itself as such. It brings itself as a collective before the eyes of the collective and has achieved the spiritual distinction of being-mediated-with-itself without any loss of substantiality. The move “from substance to subject” is to be regarded as the crowning of the whole, not as something bought at the price of political division. Indeed, this formula offers us a clue to the dialectical process that Hegel attempts to penetrate conceptually throughout the whole of his system.

From Substance to Subject

“In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as

substance, but equally as *subject*" (PG 22–23/PS 9–10). This Hegel maintains at a famous point in the preface to the *Phenomenology*, which in truth should be regarded as setting out the program for the whole Hegelian system. The preface explains the author's specific philosophical tasks to the world outside, to his contemporary readership.

Through the rediscovery of Spinoza, mediated via Jacobi, the epoch had developed the image of a system of philosophy that overcomes the structurally anchored dualisms of Kantian critique with the one-and-all principle of the *hen kai pan*. Spinoza calls that "substance." Fichte wanted to bring the light of self-consciousness to the pantheistic self-containment of Spinoza's substance that encompasses and explains everything, and so he set the I = I at the apex of all deduction. Going beyond this, Hegel now demanded the reconciliation of substance and subject, which is to be thought only as process and is therefore to be spelled out in detail. The universal must come to itself without any distance introduced from the outside, without break or opposition. It must bring about the explicit unification with itself through its own power and activity, proceeding via the negation of its becoming-other-than-itself. The Spinozistic God (*deus sive natura*) must pass over from the stasis of an immobile foundation into the mobility of spirit.

Applied specifically to the chapter on religion that we have been discussing, the general formula of a development from substance to subject produces the special circumstance that in the Greek form of life the substantial moment of ethical life, that is settled and confirmed by tradition, is already raised from being-in-itself to being-for-itself through *aesthetic* transformation. God is not just worshipped out of duty; rather, the relation to the gods is one that is thoroughly shaped and fashioned. Devotion joins with pleasure, and in religious veneration a serene and friendly society encounters itself.

Herein lies the *first historical subjectivization of spirit*, long before the modern age had embarked upon this path. That original achievement of the Greek religion of art, which amounted to securing for society an aesthetically characterized self-consciousness, not only forms, in accordance with the traditional *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, the ancient counterpart to the new self-consciousness. It is also able to make visible a paradigm of *postrevolutionary* reconciliation. Such had already been the judgment of Schiller and others.

With regard to Hegel's achievement in producing an architectonic system and in analyzing the matter at hand, it should be noted that the sophists and their movement of enlightenment are not needed to challenge the ancestral world of the gods and the control—issuing from that world—that is exercised over the course of life in the common ethos. For the sophists offer no alternative that does not succumb to the narrowness

of a technique. A social technique, however, is something quite different from a form of life. Greek culture, meanwhile, stands as a genuine form of life between the religiously adapted naturalism of the Orient and the event of revelation of the unique God in Christianity. Greek culture situates itself at this midpoint as part of a greater process that allows substance to become subject.

This conclusion can also be expressed in a different way. The spirit of a people succeeds in understanding itself adequately at the level of the aesthetic; and it succeeds precisely in the performance of the cultic act or cultus. In this way a general recognition arises, and this propagates the affirmation of the existing form of life. Thanks to the naïveté of earlier times, the Greek spirit of the people attained a legitimacy that would only be achieved later in Hegel's own epoch by the constitutional state whose institutions serve to realize the freedom of subjectivity. In this sense a circle of political concepts is closed. Starting from the memory of the beautiful world of the Greeks—which has been led into the field against the abstractions of the social contract since Rousseau—and proceeding via the modern critique of the tendency toward totalitarianism in the revolutionary establishment of new social orders, there finally arises the reforming idea of the liberal *Rechtsstaat*.¹⁶

In his discussion of the religion of art in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel is thus not just looking back nostalgically at a culture that lies in the past, but is examining a model for *present-day* (and future) social life. It makes little difference whether one considers Hegel to be projecting a model of his own back into the distant past, or to be borrowing an ideal from the Greeks themselves. Hermeneutically, these are simply two sides of the same Hegelian coin. What is important is that Hegel discerns in the religion of art a way to heal the divisions of the *modern* world. For Hegel, the aesthetico-religious model presented in the *Phenomenology* shows what it is for a community to become conscious of its own identity or "substance" without thereby being divided from itself. When this model of self-conscious community is combined with the modern freedom of the subject, it yields the distinctive Hegelian idea of the *Rechtsstaat*.

Notes

This essay was translated by Stephen Houlgate.

1. We can see this clearly today on the basis of their newly available posthumous writings. See R. Bubner, "Schelling's Discovery and Schleiermacher's Appropriation of Plato," in *The Innovations of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

2. "Last of all the Idea that unites all the rest, the Idea of *beauty* taking the

word in its higher Platonic sense" (G. W. F. Hegel, "Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism," trans. H. S. Harris, in H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight, 1770–1801* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1972], 511). For the German text, see *Mythologie der Vernunft*, ed. C. Jamme and H. Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 12.

3. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–70), 10:369 (section 559); G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. W. Wallace, together with the *Zusätze* in Boumann's text (1845), trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 294 (section 559): "Permeation [*Durchdringung*] of intuition . . . by the spiritual" (translation amended). The Suhrkamp *Werke* edition of Hegel will hereafter be cited as *Werke*.

4. On the distinctiveness of the *Phenomenology*, see R. Bubner, "Hegel's Concept of Phenomenology," in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal*, ed. G. Browning (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 31–51.

5. W. von Humboldt uses the term *Kunstreligion* quite early on in *Über Religion* (1789), although Hegel did not know this text from the posthumous writings; see W. von Humboldt, *Schriften zur Anthropologie und Geschichte*, vol. 1 of *Werke*, ed. A. Flitner and K. Giel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960–), 20. Schleiermacher in his *Reden über die Religion* (1799), which Hegel did know, understands the term, contrary to Hegel's own intentions, to refer to the Romantic inwardness of subjective feeling. Yet the "religion of art" (*Kunstreligion*) about which "I have never heard anything" is attributed by Schleiermacher to the Greeks rather than the Orient and Egypt; see F. Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. R. Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 158. This source comes closest to Hegel's intentions.

6. The best recent analysis is to be found in T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 233ff.

7. See Hegel, *Werke*, 10:367–72 (sections 556–63); Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, 293–97 (sections 556–63).

8. See Hegel, *Werke*, 13:127–44; G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 1:91–105 ("Position of Art in Relation to the Finite World and to Religion and Philosophy").

9. Still readable on the phase before the *Phenomenology* is J. H. Trede, "Mythologie und Idee: Die Stellung der 'Volksreligion' in Hegels Jenaer Philosophie der Sittlichkeit (1801–03)," in *Das Älteste Systemprogramm*, ed. R. Bubner, *Hegel-Studien* supplement 9 (1973). Also worth consulting on the formation of Hegel's classical aesthetics is A. Gethmann-Siefert, *Die Funktion der Kunst in der Geschichte*, *Hegel-Studien* supplement 25 (1984).

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Werke*, 3:495; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 410. Further references to these texts will be given in the following form: PG 495/PS 410. (Miller's translation has occasionally been amended.)

11. Unfortunately, the hyphen has been dropped from the Suhrkamp edition of the *Phenomenology*; see Hegel, PG 512.

12. See, for example, D. Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), ed. R. H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980).

13. See my study, "Schelling's Discovery and Schleiermacher's Appropriation of Plato," in Bubner, *Innovations of Idealism*.

14. See F. Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, vol. 1, book 2, in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. G. Mieth, 2 vols. (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1970).

15. Hegel, *Werke*, 12:142; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 111.

16. On this, see my study *Welche Rationalität bekommt der Gesellschaft?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), chapter 4.

Hegel and German Romanticism

Judith Norman

There is an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry.

—Plato, *The Republic*, book 10

Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do.

—Hegel, preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*

People always talk about how an analysis of the beauty of a work of art supposedly disturbs the pleasure of the art lover. Well, the real lover just won't let himself be disturbed!

—Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment" 71

Germany in the 1790s was home to the brief but remarkable movement known as Jena Romanticism. Friedrich Schlegel is the figure most closely associated with the movement, but his brother August Wilhelm took part as well, as did their wives, Caroline and Dorothea; Novalis, Schleiermacher, Tieck, and Wackenroder were active in the movement, and Schelling was something of a satellite member. As a movement and as individuals, they were energetically engaged with the rapidly changing intellectual, literary, and political world around them; they were students of Fichte, admirers of Goethe, and champions of the French Revolution (Caroline was even jailed for her Jacobin sympathies). They aimed to effect a revolution in their own right, to recast the categories of literature and philosophy through vigorous critique. And they were all quite young: at the turn of the century when the group disbanded, none of them had reached the age of forty. All told, they were a lively group of intelligent and creative young people who were well read, open minded, and artistically gifted.

And yet, according to Hegel, they represented the limit case of

moral, artistic, and intellectual depravity. The typically sober Hegel was decidedly immoderate in his opinions of the Jena group. He mentions them infrequently but almost always with venom, accusing them of having a “miserable” grasp of philosophy¹ and saying that they made “moral depravity” into “something sacred and of the highest excellence.”² In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (according to one commentator) he portrayed Friedrich Schlegel as the embodiment of avowed evil, a sort of Antichrist figure representing the blackest pitch of darkness before the speculative dawn.³ And in the same theological vein, Hegel penned a few nasty words on the occasion of Caroline Schlegel’s death (in 1809), concluding “the Devil had fetched her.”⁴

This raises a number of questions. Why did Hegel hate these people so violently? Is his reaction justified? In the first part of this essay I will pit Hegel and the Romantics (primarily Friedrich Schlegel) against each other, to judge the distance between them. In the second part I will invoke Kant as a sort of diplomatic mediator, to try to bring Hegel and the Romantics into proximity via critical philosophy. Finally, I will look at the state of the “quarrel” between Hegel and the Romantics in a more contemporary light.

Destruction

In this first section I will determine Hegel’s precise objections to Romanticism in three stages. First, I take a brief overview of the theoretical framework Hegel mobilizes to condemn Romanticism, and then I will look at precise examples from Friedrich Schlegel’s writings that seem to confirm Hegel in his bad opinion. The first text I will consider, Schlegel’s unfinished novel *Lucinde*, illustrates Hegel’s moral and aesthetic objections to Romanticism. The second text, Schlegel’s essay “On Incomprehensibility,” illustrates the philosophical threat posed by Romanticism.

What Is Romanticism?

First of all: what is Romanticism? Friedrich Schlegel once wrote in a letter to his brother: “I can hardly send you my explication of the word Romantic because it would take—125 pages!”⁵ This is, in many ways, a typically Romantic response: joking and intellectually unsatisfying, a project or a riddle rather than a clear, comprehensive, or even comprehensible reply. This is the sort of thing that inspired Hegel’s complaints that the Schlegel brothers were “anything but philosophical,”⁶ and that the romantics liked

throwing around their pet phrases with a great deal of familiarity, “but without telling us what they mean by them.”⁷ As a matter of fact, the Romantics were notoriously unwilling to nail down any sort of precise notion about the nature of their movement or the type of artistic ideal that they wished to champion; and the one characteristic that we can immediately attribute to the movement is a sort of constitutive vagueness.

Perhaps we should look to Hegel instead for a definition. Hegel famously uses the term “romanticism” as synonymous with modernity, which is to say the entire art historical period from ancient Rome up to the present. So Hegel transforms the vagueness of Romanticism’s self-definition into an unusually broad (though characteristically precise) application of the term, as a generic designation for all art of the Christian period.⁸ This era is characterized by increasingly inward, spiritual (and therefore unrepresentable) notions of subjectivity (and divinity), which have led to a fissure and growing incongruity between subject and object; and this is ultimately at odds with the sort of presentation of harmonious unity that is the hallmark of artistic excellence.

Romanticism proper, as Hegel conceives it, can be seen within this framework as an intensification of a fragmentation that has been two thousand years in the making. In the Jena movement, Hegel claims, the subject-object split has been exacerbated to a dangerous and destructive extreme. Moreover, the hypertrophied notion of subjectivity has taken on dimensions of Fichte’s transcendental ego or Absolute Subject. According to Hegel, the Romantic artist identifies with this godlike creative power, and thinks of reality (objectivity—in all its ethical substance) as the product of his infinite subjectivity, believing that what can be made can be unmade at will. Hegel writes that for the Romantics, “the individual who lives as an artist does relate to others . . . but as genius; these relations to his determinate reality and particular actions, to what is inherently universal—they all amount to nothing; he relates ironically to them.”⁹

“Irony” is the key term here: according to Hegel, it describes the cavalier attitude a Romantic genius maintains toward the world he considers to be the product of his own willful and whimsical creation. The ironic genius does not acknowledge that reality has genuine spiritual integrity and ethical substance, and instead treats it as a plaything or game. As such, Hegel writes in his lectures on aesthetics, irony is a fundamentally nihilistic and destructive attitude, which “exhibits . . . as null” “what is in reality moral and true.”¹⁰ In the *Phenomenology* he goes even further, and characterizes Schlegel’s subjectivism and irony as the embodiment of “avowed evil.”¹¹ It is lucid desecration, evil consciously willed.

We can note a (form of) irony in the fact that Hegel, the champion of the “tremendous power of the negative,” is accusing anyone else of ex-

cessive negativity. Still, the differences are clear: irony might be a type of negation, but, as Kierkegaard notes, it “was not in the service of the world spirit. It was not an element of the given actuality that must be negated and superseded by a new element, but it was all of historical actuality that it negated in order to make room for a self-created actuality.”¹² While comedy (for instance) derides only what is worthy of derision, irony is indiscriminating in its negative intents, running roughshod over the good and the noble too. For the ironist, “the highest and best of all has nothing in it, since . . . it refutes and annihilates itself in its exhibition.”¹³

Lucinde: Destroying Art and Morality

When Hegel discusses the degeneracy of Jena Romanticism and Romantic irony, he often has a specific example in mind: *Lucinde*, Friedrich Schlegel’s scandalous, unfinished novel. Indeed, Hegel uses the term “Lucinde” as something of a condensed expression for depravity. *Lucinde* is a baffling fragment of a book, a chaotic mixture of different genres and juxtaposed episodes. The narrative line, such as it is, portrays a romantic and sexual relationship between a young man, Julius, and his lover, Lucinde (whose character is something of an amalgamation of the Schlegel brothers’ wives). This is a relationship in which, Hegel disapprovingly writes, “the wedding ceremony is superfluous and a formality that might be discarded.”¹⁴ When discussing the morality of marriage in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel writes (and underlines) the word “Lucinde” in the margin and continues:

A girl in surrendering her body loses her honour. With a man, however, the case is otherwise, because he has a field for ethical activity outside the family. A girl is destined in essence for the marriage tie and for that only; it is therefore demanded of her that her love shall take the form of marriage and that the different moments in love attain their true rational relation to each other.¹⁵

As one commentator notes, it is slightly odd to describe Lucinde as a girl, since the novel portrays her as an older woman.¹⁶ She has clearly matured in a nonrational manner, and failed to place herself under the law. This is illustrated very directly in the sexual topography of one episode in the novel, “A Dithyrambic Fantasy on the Loveliest Situation in the World.” It is a thinly veiled depiction of sexual relations in which Lucinde is (to put it bluntly) on top. Schlegel does not use this reversal to masculinize her, but rather to suggest a “revaluation of values” of a sort that has since become emblematic of Romanticism—with passivity, darkness, the uncon-

scious, instinct, imagination, and nature triumphing over activity, light, and conscious reason. (Contrary to Hegel's remark, *Lucinde* is more about masculine than feminine surrender.) But this simply reinforces the sexual politics Hegel found so distasteful in the novel. In this illicit union, the natural triumphs over the rational and sensuousness over spirit. Lucinde refuses sublation.

Schlegel knows he is being shocking and says so. Indeed, *Lucinde's* romantic revaluation is explicitly transgressive, and occasionally descends into a barefaced exercise in *épater les bourgeois* which would seem to confirm Hegel's assessment of Romanticism as self-conscious, willful destruction, brazenness for its own sake. This is very much in evidence in a moment of narrative self-consciousness immediately following the "Dithyrambic Fantasy." The episode is called "A Character Sketch of Little Wilhelmine," and is a description of a two-year-old little girl. Julius explains that

this character sketch is supposed to portray nothing more than an ideal that I want to keep before me always, so as never to stray from the fine line of propriety in this little work of art . . . and to make you forgive me in advance for all the liberties and indelicacies I propose to take and commit . . . Am I wrong when I look for morality primarily in children, and for delicacy and elegance in word and thought primarily in women?¹⁷

But what is the content of this child morality and female delicacy? Schlegel continues, calling our attention to the central image of his character sketch, as Julius addresses Lucinde:

And now look! This adorable little Wilhelmine quite often takes an inexpressible pleasure in lying on her back and kicking her legs up in the air, careless of her dress and the world's opinion. If Wilhelmine does that, what may I not do . . . ! Oh enviable freedom from prejudice! You too, my dear friend, should cast off all remnants of false shame, just as I've often torn off your hateful clothes and strewn them all over in a lovely chaos. And if this brief story of my life seems too wild, remember it's only a child and tolerate its innocent playfulness.¹⁸

Here then, is our morality and delicacy. Schlegel's explicitly infantile equation and positive valorization of the naked and the natural marks another anti-Hegelian moment. Hegel writes approvingly of the Greek convention of clothing female (although not male) sculptural figures. It is appropriate, he writes, since "sensuous beauty as such is not the ultimate aim of sculpture." Rather, art in general aims to present the spiritual in a

sensuous form. But the implication, as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe notes, is that “woman expresses the spiritual only provided she does not show herself, provided she conceals in herself the sensuous (her body).”¹⁹ By contrast, the novel *Lucinde*, like its female protagonist, is brazen, explicit, and devoid of shame; it kicks its legs in the air, leaving Hegelian spirit in lovely chaos for no apparent reason other than the joy of willful destruction of moral norms.

In fact, and by way of referring these moral objections to aesthetic ones, something like this ambition apparently lies at the heart of Schlegel’s theory of poetry. He writes: “This is the origin of all poetry, to suspend [*aufzuheben*] the notions and the laws of rational thought and to place us within a beautiful confusion of fantasy in the original chaos of human nature.”²⁰ Poetry authorizes the suspension of reason; it is the elevation of chaos over order. As Julius explains:

Poetry braids the blossoms of all things into an airy wreath, and so too Wilhelmine names and rhymes together places, times, events, people, playthings, and foods, with everything mixed up in a Romantic confusion—an image for every word. And that without any of those digressions and artificial transitions which after all only serve the purposes of reason and impede the bolder flights of the imagination.²¹

Here is another moment of novelistic self-consciousness and self-explanation, and another Romantic revaluation of values, which, as if specifically calculated to give Hegel future offense, describes poetry as sublating reason.

Needless to say, little Wilhelmine “has much more of a liking for poetry than philosophy,” according to Julius, “and so prefers to be driven about and walks only when she has to.”²² For Schlegel, apparently, philosophy walks on its head while poetry doesn’t walk at all. Wilhelmine prefers poetry to philosophy because she is lazy, which means, according to Schlegel, that she would rather play than labor. Laziness and play are not the same (you can have strenuous play), but they stand together here, since Schlegel equates reason with achievement and playfulness with a retreat into (lovely) chaos. Play, like laziness, represents a failure to get to work, and this is another topic about which Hegel famously has a great deal to say. When Hegel launches his attack on laziness in the preface to the *Phenomenology*, it is of course not Schlegel whom he has in mind, but proponents of intellectual intuition, such as Schelling. Schelling refuses to undertake “the enormous labor of world-history,” preferring the spontaneity of a direct intuition of the absolute.²³ Hegel’s critique of Romantic

frivolity must be distinguished from his critique of Schellingian intuition. In a sense, Schelling is closer to Hegel, because both thought it a serious task to actually overcome the subject-object dichotomy, whether by a long road or a short one.²⁴ Schelling might be cheating to achieve this goal, but at least he is trying to get something done. Hegel's criticism of the Romantics isn't that they took the short road, but rather that their road didn't lead anywhere, and they didn't seem to want it to. Poetry, like Lucinde herself, refuses rational sublation—and not for any apparent goal other than that of self-conscious laziness and brazen defiance of reason.

Lucinde does make something of a mock effort to address the idealist problematic of the subject-object dichotomy in an episode appropriately entitled "A Reflection." (Schlegel often plays with the concept of reflection: little Wilhelmine is evidently in Lacan's mirror stage, and fascinated with mimicry and images of herself.) Although Lucinde and Julius appear at first to be discussing Fichte's transcendental idealism, there is just enough ambiguity in the text to suggest that what they are really discussing, as Paul de Man puts it, is "very physical questions involved in sexual intercourse."²⁵ Subject and object combine not in moral reason (as in Fichte) but in sexual union. Although this has resonances with themes in the early Hegel ("love" as an early form of dialectic), any comparison is blocked by the fact that the sexual vocabulary is ironically interpolated into the philosophical. (We see why Schlegel defines irony as "transcendental buffoonery,"²⁶ and writes that in irony "everything should be playful and serious.")²⁷ The ironic intervention is simply destructive, preventing the philosophical content from gaining an upper hand; in the end, the playful is not subordinated to the serious any more than Lucinde is subordinated to Julius (or the object ultimately subordinated to the subject in Fichte's subjective idealism).

This is why Hegel can associate negativity with labor in his own philosophy and negativity with play in Schlegel's. In Hegel's eyes, irony is not simply playfulness, it is specifically mockery, the willful annihilation of the "highest and best," like female virtue or Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Which is to say that Hegel does not condemn Lucinde or Romanticism because he dislikes women or poetry (just think of his treatment of Antigone or Schiller), but because he holds them in the highest regard. He believes that in his system he accords them each a position that preserves their substantial content and contribution to the development of the speculative idea. But in mocking all spiritual ideals, Romantic irony destroys whatever speculative substance art might have, and derides women's genuinely positive contribution to ethical life. Far from being the champion of poetry or women, Schlegel is, in Hegel's eyes, their destroyer.

"On Incomprehensibility": Destroying Philosophy

After accusing Romanticism of nihilism and moral turpitude, it seems a bit trivial to add that Hegel thought the Romantics were unclear. But everyone did, and Friedrich Schlegel was prompted to offer a spirited defense of incomprehensibility in an essay in his journal, *Athenaeum*, specifically devoted to the topic. "[I]s incomprehensibility really something so unmitigatedly contemptible and evil?" he asks.²⁸ Here, then, we see another clear point of contrast to Hegel, philosopher of the concept ("blasphemous rationality," says Schlegel).

In many ways, though, the little essay "On Incomprehensibility" has more to disturb Hegel than *Lucinde* ever did. On the face of it at least, *Lucinde* is just a rude book, the little boy Schlegel insulting the old man Hegel, mocking his ideals and inverting his values. Hegel could have ignored it (and for the most part, he did). But in this essay Schlegel offers something like a defense of his sins and a set of tools that could, in principle, undermine Hegel's system of philosophy. Incomprehensibility is not simply a game he is playing with his reader; it is, as he explains in a rather remarkable passage, built into the structure of language:

[In my writings] I wanted to demonstrate that words often understand themselves better than do those who use them . . . there must be a connection or some sort of secret brotherhood among philosophical words that, like a host of spirits too soon aroused, bring everything into confusion in their writings and exert the invisible power of the World Spirit on even those who try to deny it. I wanted to show that the purest and most genuine incomprehension emanates precisely from science and the arts—which by their very nature aim at comprehension and at making comprehensible—and from philosophy and philology; and so that the whole business shouldn't turn around in too palpable a circle I had made a firm resolve really to be comprehensible, at least this time.²⁹

Words have a life of their own. Novalis concurs in a brilliant essay called "Monologue." A masterpiece of ironic formalism, it is a meditation on language which evolves into language meditating on itself:

There is really something very foolish about speaking and writing; proper conversation is merely a word game. One can only marvel at the ridiculous mistake that people make when they think—that they speak for the sake of things. The particular quality of language, the fact that it is concerned only with itself, is known to no one.³⁰

To say so is paradoxical, of course, but “irony is the form of paradox.”³¹

This concept of incomprehensibility throws new light on *Lucinde*, and explains why and how playfulness operates on a formal as well as a thematic level in the text (how it happens, for instance, that “you are writing a splendid and coherent philosophical argument but, lo and behold, you are describing sexual intercourse,” as Paul de Man puts it);³² playfulness necessarily infuses seriousness—irony is not under complete authorial control. And this is key: Hegel thought *Lucinde* was a conscious destruction, Schlegel willfully evoking chaos to negate the “highest and best.” But now Schlegel is telling us that the highest and best *themselves* necessarily call forth chaos.

There are two immediate results, of unequal importance to Hegel. The first and less significant is that Hegel is apparently wrong in his assessment of Romantic irony—Romantic frivolity and impertinence are not the willful assertion of an unbounded genius, but rather the (at least) partly unconscious effect of language itself.³³ But the weightier consequence of Schlegel’s and Novalis’s theory is that philosophy itself is not safe from linguistic indetermination, as Schlegel emphasizes in the passage above. Philosophy too incorporates an element of incomprehensibility by virtue of its linguistic structure alone; and so even the philosopher can be “outwitted by language,” as Novalis says. Schlegel recommends that philosophy acknowledge this indeterminacy: “metaphysics should proceed through several cycles . . . Once the end has been reached, *it should always start again from the beginning*, alternating between chaos and system, preparing chaos for the system, then a new chaos. (This procedure is very philosophical.)”³⁴ Needless to say, this is not the sort of cycle Hegel would want his encyclopedic system of philosophy to trace. But if Schlegel is right, Hegel doesn’t have any choice. The “invisible power of the World Spirit” will throw things into confusion in any event—where, by “World Spirit,” Schlegel must have in mind some Gnostic counterpart to anything Hegel would call by that name. Since this destruction of sense is the work of language, not the author, even philosophers cannot escape from the specter of the incomprehensible.

Or maybe they can. Schlegel comforts us in this 1799 essay that incomprehensibility will soon be resolved and the world will be safe for philosophy:

Then the nineteenth century will indeed make a beginning of it and then the little riddle of the incomprehensibility of the *Athenaeum* will be solved. . . . In the nineteenth century every human being, every reader will find *Lucinde* innocent, *Genoveva* Protestant [Tieck’s Catholic play], and A. W. Schlegel’s didactic *Elegies* almost too simple and transparent.³⁵

This is, of course, ironic, but one of Schlegel's favorite tricks, and a key feature of his conception of incomprehensibility, is deferring the completion of present sense-making projects into the indefinite future. He writes that these projects should be understood as "tendencies" and "the age is the Age of Tendencies. . . ."

As to whether or not I am of the opinion that all these tendencies are going to be corrected and resolved by me, or maybe by my brother or by Tieck, or by someone else from our group, or only some son of ours, or grandson, great-grandson, grandson twenty-seven times removed, or only at the last judgment, or never: that I leave to the wisdom of the reader, to whom this question really belongs.³⁶

This theme of deferral was already evident in Schlegel's projected 125-page explication of Romanticism as well as his famous attempt to define Romantic poetry:

Romantic poetry [*Poesie*] is a progressive, universal poetry. . . . The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory and only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterize its idea. . . . The romantic kind of poetry is the only one that is more than a kind, that is, as it were, poetry itself: for in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic.³⁷

We are back where the discussion began, it seems, with Romanticism's constitutive vagueness. Vagueness turns destructive when reason is not simply ignored but actively undermined. And this is Hegel's great, damning verdict on the Romantics: their ironical attitude takes delight in deriding everything good and holy. The brunt of this objection remains, even apart from Hegel's incorrect assessment about the role of Romantic genius. The rational contribution of women to ethical life, the spiritual role of art in the presentation of the absolute, the function of philosophy in the exhibition of the concept—all these Hegelian principles stand opposed to Romanticism with its irony, effrontery, and predilection for the incomprehensible.

Construction

We have seen what Hegel thought of the Romantics, and we have examined themes in Friedrich Schlegel's writings that seem to justify Hegel's

exaggerated antipathy. I will now look at the Romantics in a different light. Given Hegel's imputation of nihilism to the movement, we might be surprised to see Schlegel claim: "Kant introduced the concept of the negative into philosophy. Wouldn't it be worthwhile trying now to introduce the concept of the positive into philosophy as well?"³⁸ In this section, I will try to show that, as suggested in this quotation, the Romantics had both an allegiance to Kant and a constructive ambition. By emphasizing their Kantianism, we can begin to put the Romantics into a more positive relationship with Hegel, seeing them as Hegel's philosophical cousins or "prodigal sons of speculation" as Kierkegaard put it.³⁹ Specifically, we can see both parties as emerging from the same critical matrix and responding to similar sets of philosophical problems. This does not necessarily mean that Hegel ultimately could or should have been sympathetic to the Romantics (any more than he was ultimately sympathetic to Kant); it merely shows that Hegel could have recognized the Romantics as fellow post-Kantians rather than as Evil Incarnate, and responded with dialogue rather than diatribe. The resulting dialogue, as I will indicate in this section, could have been a rather interesting one.

Return of the Prodigals

Schlegel joked about his philosophical lineage in his essay "On Incomprehensibility," suggesting that he might want to contribute to the ongoing quest for philosophical truth and "to place myself on Fichte's shoulders, just as he placed himself on Reinhold's shoulders, Reinhold on Kant's shoulders, Kant on Leibniz's, and so on infinitely back to the prime shoulder."⁴⁰ Here is another appearance of the theme of deferral and incompleteness; what's more, it plays with the idea of incomprehensibility, since the notion that an infinite regress leads to a prime shoulder is paradoxical (keeping in mind that "irony is the form of paradox"). But viewing this scenario in the context of Schlegel's presumed Kantianism, we can begin to see the paradox as specifically antinomic, and in fact reminiscent of the second antinomy. And this puts things in a new light.

Kant did not formulate his antinomies as an exercise in "transcendental buffoonery" (to recall another one of Schlegel's definitions of irony) or on a nihilistic whim. He thought he had found real and insurmountable limits to the possibility of knowledge, and that attempts to transcend these limits would result in incoherence of one kind or another. But the truth is, the Romantics were quite Kantian in many ways; specifically, they were committed to what later idealists (such as Schelling and Hegel) considered to be the finite standpoint of reflection. That is, unlike Hegel, they basically accepted the restrictions the Kantian philosophy

placed on knowledge, most particularly the constitutive and ultimate dichotomy between the empirical subject and its transcendental ground. More specifically, they agreed with the Fichtean statement of this point, that subject-object identity, a fully self-conscious subjectivity, is the goal of an infinite striving, and therefore not ultimately realizable. (Once again, it is apparent that Hegel's assertion that the Romantics identified with the transcendental ego is mistaken.) But further, the Romantics agreed with Fichte's Kantian insight that the finite ego will not even be able to cognitively grasp the notion of transcendental subjectivity, since it cannot be subjected to finite conditions of knowledge. Thus, Fichte writes that his notion of transcendental subjectivity

has no name, never occurs in consciousness, and *cannot be grasped by means of concepts*. . . . One enters my philosophy by means of what is absolutely *incomprehensible*. . . . Everything that is *comprehensible* presupposes a higher sphere in which it is *comprehended* and is therefore not the highest thing, precisely *because* it is *comprehensible*.⁴¹

And since this is the philosophical context in which the Romantics were working, it is not surprising to find Schlegel writing an essay defending incomprehensibility, playing with paradox, and repeatedly thematizing the notions of both infinite progress and regress. Dialectics might lead the way to a higher standpoint of absolute knowing for Hegel, but the transcendental dialectic establishes the insurmountable persistence of finitude and epistemological limitation for Kant.

Art and the Absolute

In fact (and happily for the Romantics), there are grounds in Kant's philosophy for thinking that aesthetic experience has a certain privilege in gaining access to the supersensible, given the limitations of theoretical understanding. Typically, in cognitive judgments, the manifold in intuition is subject to a priori synthesis in accordance with a determinate set of categories. In judgments of taste, however, "no determinate concept restricts [the cognitive powers] to a particular rule of cognition." This is because when we encounter a beautiful object, the material received by sensibility and then presented by the imagination "harmonizes with the conditions of the universality that is the business of the understanding in general."⁴² This harmony creates a state of free play between the faculties. Given the unexpected affinity exhibited by the imagination, the understanding is suddenly released from its duty to produce determinate cognitions. It does not labor, but plays. This play is experienced as a feeling

of pleasure which serves as the ground for our judgment that an object is beautiful. So in the pleasurable experience of free play, we recognize (albeit subjectively) the conformity of nature to the subjective conditions of knowing. Or to state the case strongly (much more strongly than Kant would have liked, and in terms that he would have repudiated), the aesthetic experience points to the hidden ground of subject-object identity, which is to say: the Absolute.

Hegel certainly recognizes the proximity of his own philosophy to Kant's aesthetic intimation. He writes: "[In art] Kant has put before us the Idea, comprehensive even in its content." He immediately points out, however, that in Kant "what may be called the laziness of thought, when dealing with the supreme Idea, finds a too easy mode of evasion . . . [and] clings hard to the disjunction of the *Begriff* from reality."⁴³ Here is an unexpected point of kinship between Kant and little Wilhelmine: they were both lazy, which is to say they privileged art over philosophy *even though* (unlike Schelling) they contrasted aesthetic *play* to philosophical knowledge. But Kant, at least, should have known better (at least according to Hegel). Kant had the potential to develop his aesthetic insights into rational, philosophically grounded conclusions with genuine speculative value. Unfortunately, he failed to realize that potential. Hegel notes: "It is in these *aperçus* alone that the Kantian philosophy rises to the speculative height."⁴⁴ Hegel makes it clear, however (at least in his mature philosophy), that he himself is not interested in a merely aesthetic encounter with the possibility of a supersensible ground: this all-important discovery of the conjunction of the *Begriff* and reality cannot be confined to a feeling, and the *Logic* will labor to appropriate this insight for thought.⁴⁵ All in all, then, Hegel is ambivalent about Kant's achievement, seeing Kant's aesthetic theory as a work of great but unfulfilled promise. This is in marked contrast to Hegel's decided *lack* of ambivalence, his consistent hostility, toward the Romantics. If the Romantics really are Kantian, however, then they might expect some share in the intelligent, respectful sort of criticism Hegel accords Kant.

And in fact the Romantics were quite impressed with Kant's aesthetics and its notion of free play and the metaphysical significance Kant cautiously suggests might accrue to art, the idea that it might intimate some higher metaphysical ground. (The Romantics might also have been more impressed than Hegel ever was by Kant's account of the epistemological limitations that blocked anything like a speculative approach to the problem of a supersensible ground.) We see this very clearly in Schlegel's "Dialogue on Poetry," a conversation between the fictionalized counterparts of the Jena group that serves as something of a Romantic manifesto. Schlegel makes clear that the ability of art to put things into play is of supreme importance for the project of Romanticism, writing: "We demand

irony; we demand that the events, the people, in short, the whole game of life actually be taken up and presented as a game as well." This is the sort of statement that got Hegel upset: irony means that life gets treated like a game, lacking substance and meaning. But the dialogue continues (in the voice of "Antonio," Friedrich Schlegel's fictitious counterpart):

This seems to us to be the most essential point and doesn't everything depend on it? We are only concerned with the meaning of the whole; anything that individually stirs, touches, engages or delights the senses, the heart, the understanding or the imagination seems to us to be only a sign, a way of intuiting the whole, at the moment when we raise ourselves to it.

Lothario: All the sacred games of art are only distant imitations of the infinite game of the world, the work of art that eternally produces itself.

Ludovico: In other words: all beauty is allegory. Precisely because it is inexpressible, the highest can only be expressed allegorically.⁴⁶

This puts Schlegel's notion of irony into a decidedly new context. Against the Hegelian impulse to interpret irony as merely destructive, we see irony "only concerned with the meaning of the whole." Irony is both destructive and constructive. It abases by "way of intuiting the whole," puts things into play to indicate the supersensible, and thus rises, as Hegel said of Kant, "to the speculative height."

Ludovico's remark is worth a closer look. Schlegel later amended the text to read "symbol" rather than "allegory," a change that brings the sentiment into close proximity with Kant's dictum that "beauty is the symbol of morality," the visible correlate or analogue of a supersensible freedom. This notion is picked up by Novalis, who states that poetry "represents the unrepresentable. It sees the invisible, feels the unfeeling, etc."⁴⁷ Beauty is symbolic if it refers us to a supersensible unity that cannot truly be known. This is a task that Romanticism apparently sets itself, judging by Novalis's claim: "By endowing the commonplace with a higher meaning, the ordinary with mysterious respect, the known with the dignity of the unknown, the finite with the appearance of the infinite, I am making it Romantic."⁴⁸ If Romanticism involves the permutation of the finite into the infinite, we can no longer wonder at Schlegel's reluctance to explain Romanticism, but instead feel surprised at his optimism in thinking such an explication could be confined to a mere 125 pages, when it took Hegel's *Phenomenology* many hundreds of pages to explain the same thing!

But Would Kant Have Liked *Lucinde*?

Let's return to *Lucinde* to see if it is susceptible of a more Kantian reading that might render it more acceptable in Hegel's eyes. We can begin by

revisiting Schlegel's statement: "This is the origin of all poetry, to suspend the notions and the laws of rational thought and to place us within a beautiful confusion of fantasy in the original chaos of human nature." In fact, this statement does have numerous resonances with Kantian theory. The distinction between the laws of rational thought and an original chaos elides with a Kantian distinction between the categories of understanding and the manifold in intuition (William James's "blooming buzzing confusion") which the categories work into objects of experience. Schlegel's remark that "the entire, unending world [is] constructed by the understanding out of incomprehensibility or chaos" helps confirm this reading.⁴⁹ Similarly Kantian is the notion that poetry involves a suspension of these laws for the sake of revealing a pleasing order of its own. And little Wilhelmine, with her love of poetry, is an illustrative vehicle for this self-ordering capacity of language. To recall Schlegel's description:

Poetry braids the blossoms of all things into an airy wreath, and so too Wilhelmine names and rhymes together places, times, events, people, playthings, and foods, with everything mixed up in a Romantic confusion.

Unimpeded by reason, the imagination lets poetry "braid" words into "wreaths." The thought is well rendered with the English term "posy," which means both poem (poesy) and bouquet. The floral vocabulary (a constant theme of Romanticism) also finds resonances in Kant, who cites as primary examples of pure or "free" beauty: "flowers, free designs, lines aimlessly intertwined and called foliage."⁵⁰ Schlegel shares Kant's propensity to think there is something aesthetically basic about aimless, floral lines, writing that "the arabesque is the oldest and the most original form of the human imagination."⁵¹ Schlegel's reference to braiding wreaths is interesting too, suggesting that poetry effects an "airy" form of combination, dominated by artistic rather than rational objectives. In more Kantian language, it shows that the manifold in the imagination is capable of a sort of preconceptual synthesis, or, as Schlegel writes, words exhibit a "secret brotherhood."⁵²

Although perhaps "sisterhood" would be more accurate, because the sexual dynamics of *Lucinde* are related to this sort of aesthetic theory. A long and familiar tradition (into which Kant firmly fell) implicitly or explicitly sexualized the concepts of reason and sensation. Reason is active, lawful, masculine, dominant; sensibility is passive, lawless, feminine, subordinate. Although free play is a function of two active faculties (understanding and imagination), it is nonetheless true that free play occurs only because the manifold presented in imagination contains an orderli-

ness that did not result from any a priori synthesis. That is, the ultimate source of the order is a posteriori, received in sensibility. This suggests something of a reversal of the traditional relationship between active understanding and passive sensibility; understanding stops its labor of producing determinate cognition because the manifold unexpectedly conforms to the conditions of cognition in general. That is, in aesthetic experiences the active position of (masculine) rationality is unexpectedly trumped by a (feminine) passive, receptive faculty of sensation and (in Schlegel's words) lovely chaos. If *Lucinde* inverts the traditional hierarchy of reason and sense, it does so in the spirit of Kant.

Hegel, on the other hand, can be seen as binding himself to the mast of philosophy in order to resist the siren call of beauty. We see the stark difference between his vocabulary and that of Kant in the first pages of the introduction to his lectures on aesthetics, where he addresses what is apparently the most immediate objection that a systematic study of art such as his might face: "It may seem unsuitable and pedantic to treat with scientific seriousness something that is not in itself of a serious nature."⁵³ This concern arises "even if the softening of the mental temper that preoccupation with beauty has the power to produce does not become detrimental, as an effeminizing influence."⁵⁴ Hegel takes this concern seriously, agreeing that "the beauty of art does in fact appear in a form expressly contrasted with abstract thought."⁵⁵ "Still," Hegel writes:

the power of the thinking spirit (mind) lies . . . in recognizing itself in its alienation in the shape of feeling and the sensuous, its other form; by transforming the altered thought back into definite thoughts, and so restoring it to itself. And in this preoccupation with the other of itself, thinking spirit should not be considered untrue to itself as if forgetting or surrendering itself to the other, and it is not so weak that it lacks strength to comprehend what is different from itself, but rather it comprehends both itself and its opposite . . . and thus becomes the power and activity that consists in sublating [*aufzuheben*] its own alienation. And so the work of art in which thought alienates itself belongs, like thought itself, to the sphere of comprehending thought.⁵⁶

In other words, Hegel will only take seriously something that is itself serious, namely the spiritual content of the artwork. Art is not, at the end of the day, mind's encounter with alterity; it is a recognition and reclamation of its own alienated product. Thinking spirit will not be "untrue to itself," which is to say it will not lose control or show itself "weak"; it will retain "power and activity" and labor to resolve beauty into "the sphere of comprehending thought."⁵⁷ It will not assume a passive role, "forgetting or sur-

rendering itself” to the temptations of beauty, like Julius surrendered himself to Lucinde (“everything belongs to you,” he says).⁵⁸

Kantian aesthetic apprehension, on the other hand, involves just such a surrender, an (albeit temporary) suspension of the restrictive power of the understanding. That is, the implicit order displayed by the imagination halts the production of determinate concepts by the understanding, and Kant equates this unproductive state with playfulness. Crucially, this playfulness is of the highest metaphysical significance—it alerts us to a hidden order in the manifold, a private, inner complicity with reason, a hidden connection between the material order of nature and the rational order of the understanding, between subject and object: it is an intimation of the absolute. We have already seen Hegel complaining that Kant fails to accord this discovery the importance it deserves—that he leaves it as an intimation rather than an exposition of the supersensible. But turning the tables, we should note that from Kant’s perspective, a Hegelian goal of absolute knowledge is the dream of a spirit seer. The experience of the play of the imagination in an aesthetic experience is the closest a Kantian can get to a theoretical perspective on the supersensible. If so, then perhaps *Lucinde* is not only a thoroughly constructive work, but—a supreme metaphysical achievement?⁵⁹

De/construction

The Romantics were fond of repeating that the artist must combine the principles of creation and destruction. Hegel only really noticed the destructive aspects of Romantic expression, the fact that (in the words of Kierkegaard, who was very much Hegel’s ally in this matter) the ethical is subordinated to the aesthetic—and a bad aesthetic at that. But Romanticism has a constructive side as well: it was centrally concerned with the question of aesthetic production, and convinced of its supreme metaphysical significance. This seems to alleviate some of Hegel’s objections with respect to Romanticism’s nihilistic character. Given our revised, philosophically fortified reading of Romanticism, is there still any motivation for Hegel’s exaggerated hostility?

Deconstruction à la Derrida

Several important commentators, most notably Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and David Farrell Krell, have explored the notion that Hegel perceived Romanticism as a threat to his speculative idealism. Hegel’s system, the

argument goes, and specifically his aesthetics, is haunted by the specter of a moment he could not sublate. In particular, as Krell writes, *Lucinde* represents “poetry, literature, and aesthetics as such, the troublesome parts of the system, the rejected and dejected materials that inevitably return to haunt the speculative.”⁶⁰ Lacoue-Labarthe explains, “[The fact] that the ‘sensuous’ figure may give itself as an ‘end in itself’ is, from the point of view of the speculative, something intolerable. . . . The speculative cannot bear that anything nonspiritual be considered an ‘end in itself.’”⁶¹ As such (and as I also argued in an earlier section), *Lucinde*’s literary *Sansculottismus*, its insurrection against spirit, is a declaration of independence of the sensuous, a refusal to be sublated into a speculative vision of system.

Of course, this reading would only carry weight if the notion of an aesthetic moment *haunting* the speculative could ultimately be distinguished from a Hegelian affirmation that the moment of aesthetic difference is *preserved* in the speculative. Art is not, after all, dead. (And if Blanchot can argue that the works of the Marquis de Sade are Hegelian by virtue of their sheer negativity, then it seems difficult for a modern-day Hegelian to get upset over a *Lucinde*.)⁶² And besides, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Krell are well aware, Romanticism is not simply a haunting presence, an undigested and perhaps indigestible piece of Kantianism stalking the project of speculative idealism. To treat it as such is, in an odd sense, to buy into Hegel’s interpretation of Romanticism as simply an obstinate, perverse, nihilistic piece of antisystem.

Before developing this line of criticism further, we can note that *Lucinde* is not the only one who resists sublation into the philosophy of the concept—language does as well. In the section on Schlegel’s essay “On Incomprehensibility,” I argued that Romanticism’s theory of incomprehensibility posed the greatest challenge to Hegel—this was the idea that language will ultimately undermine any attempt to philosophize in a perfectly comprehensible manner. Words have a way of outwitting even the most cautious and sober-minded of philosophers, and the Romantics didn’t rate the success of their philosophical contemporaries too highly. Schlegel once painted a gloriously slapstick image of Fichte as a drunk who keeps mounting his horse only to slip off the other side.⁶³ And he wrote that “Schelling’s philosophy . . . concludes like Aeschylus’s *Prometheus* in earthquake and ruins.”⁶⁴ We can only imagine what he would have said about Hegel.

On the other hand, how much imagination do we really need? Perhaps we only need to look as far as Derrida: it is clearly the task of a deconstructive reading to listen for seismic tremors in Hegel’s system too, issuing perhaps from properties of language (but also from wayward sexualized vocabulary). Derrida explains: “I believe that Hegel’s text is

necessarily fissured: that it is something more and other than the circular closure of its representation."⁶⁵ Derrida looks for what is left out of Hegel's system, what resists dialectical appropriation. But he doesn't look for this outside the text (noting, for instance, that Hegel doesn't mention this thing or that); rather, he looks for fundamental instabilities in the concept sets that Hegel uses, ways in which the very language manifests an instability and unease and obliquely refers to possibilities unexpressed within the text. Since these exclusions are definitive of the ideas themselves, Derrida sees them as both enabling the function of the Hegelian concepts while at the same time forestalling their totalizing ambitions. This has obvious resonances with the Romantic vision of simultaneous construction and destruction and Schlegel's remark that "it's equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two."⁶⁶ Language itself, Derrida is concerned to show, creates fissures in the text and helps guard against speculative closure; as such, Derrida seems to fulfill Schlegel's vision of a Gnostic World Spirit, haunting Hegel's speculative system and "bringing everything into confusion."

But again, we face the same issue that arose from Lacoue-Labarthe and Krell's readings: it is an open question whether a Derridean treatment of these Hegelian fissures operates against Hegel or in fact in league with him. Against Derrida's claim that "Hegel's text is something more and other than the circular closure of its representation," we can ask whether Hegel's notion of "circular closure" doesn't specifically *include* the "more and other."⁶⁷ After all, the idea that concepts manifest a fundamental unease and instability is itself a fundamental tenet of Hegel's dialectical method. Whenever Derrida tries to run ahead of Hegel, he finds that Hegel is already there. (It is worth remembering Kierkegaard's cautionary remark: "Those who have gone beyond Hegel are . . . like country people who must always give their address as via a larger city; thus the address in this case must read—John Doe via Hegel.")⁶⁸ "We will never be finished with the reading and rereading of Hegel," Derrida famously admits, "and, in a certain way, I do nothing other than attempt to explain myself on this point."

This is not the place to judge the success of deconstruction vis-à-vis Hegel, however. A more precise comparison of dialectics and *différance* would be needed to do that.⁶⁹ It is clear enough that Derrida did harbor hostile intentions toward Hegel's system, writing: "If there were a definition of *différance* it would be . . . the destruction of the Hegelian *relève* [sublation] wherever it operates."⁷⁰ For our purposes, it is more important to ask Derrida: would such a (hypothetical) definition take—125 pages? In other words, does deconstruction reiterate the aim of Romanticism? Is it in league with Romanticism's refusal to allow sensibility to be ultimately

sublated in the concept? Perhaps. After all, Derrida is undoubtedly another one of speculation's prodigal sons. But by way of insisting on the specificity of Romanticism *proper* (because everything is beginning to look a bit like everything else), we can note that a Romantic "deconstruction" of Hegel would look quite different from anything Derrida would do: it would, in fact, take the form of a character sketch of Hegel himself.

Romantic Deconstruction

Let's review what has been achieved. As I have shown, one way of posing the question of Romanticism's threat to Hegel is to refer Romanticism to deconstruction, and see it as a specter that haunts Hegel's system and somehow blocks speculative closure. This is undoubtedly one of the possibilities that Romanticism offers, but it's not necessarily a very interesting or successful one. For one thing, this strategy (of haunting, fissuring, undermining) leads back to the sort of undecidable death-grip entanglement with Hegel that Derrida seems locked in. But for another thing, this approach risks losing sight of the specificity of Romanticism.⁷¹ As I mentioned earlier, Romanticism did not define itself in opposition to philosophy, nor did it want to undermine philosophy. It had a positive agenda and totalizing ambition of its own: it wanted to create poetry.

Which is to say art for the Romantics didn't represent an occasional holiday for cognition so much as a permanent revolution of the imagination. "The world must be made Romantic," Novalis wrote.⁷² Schlegel had a similar notion, as seen in his definition of Romantic poetry as "universal" and "infinite." In his "Dialogue on Poetry" he even begins describing plants as poems. This tendency to overpoeticize provoked this exasperated response from Caroline Schlegel: "If it goes on like this then before we know it, one thing after another will have turned into poetry. So is everything poetry?"⁷³ To which we can add: even Hegel? Novalis once fantasized about "Fichtecizing artistically," and Schlegel proposed to do it by synthesizing Fichte with Goethe. But what would the *Phenomenology* look like if it were really a *Bildungsroman*? Who would we need to synthesize Hegel with (if not Genet . . .)? In other words, what would a genuinely Romantic treatment of Hegel really look like, if not Derridean deconstruction?

Schlegel once wrote: "Since nowadays philosophy criticizes everything that comes in front of its nose, a criticism of philosophy would be nothing more than justifiable retaliation," and Schlegel clearly saw his own role as that of a critic.⁷⁴ We can explore the question of a Romantic treatment of Hegel by looking at the sort of criticism of philosophy Schlegel proposes. "The true task and inner essence of criticism," Schlegel wrote in his 1804 essay "On the Essence of Criticism," "is to characterize"—which

means to provide a character sketch of some author, to trace the idiosyncratic development of his thoughts.⁷⁵ Such a characterization is particularly important in the case of philosophy, Schlegel argues. Indeed, "someone can only claim to understand a work or a thinker when he has reconstructed the process and structure of his thoughts."

You can bring together a set of historical data in a single concept, or determine a concept not merely by differentiation, but by constructing it in its becoming, from its origin up to its completion, giving the inner history of the concept along with the concept itself: characterization entails both of these, and as such it is the highest task of the critic and the most intimate marriage of history and philosophy.⁷⁶

Here is an unlikely appearance of the much-contested philosophical theme of construction, the creative production of concepts that Kant confined to mathematics, Schelling extended to philosophy, and Schlegel here makes the province of criticism. Criticism is not analytic but synthetic and creative, helping complete philosophy by uniting a historical "construction" of the philosopher's thoughts to the thoughts themselves.⁷⁷ So not only does criticism have more of a complementary than an antagonistic relation to philosophy, it actually improves on philosophy. But going even further, Schlegel claims that criticism is something of a condition for the possibility of philosophy (as with Kant, critique is transcendental): "literature cannot exist for long without criticism," Schlegel writes, and language will die without poetry. It follows that "the critic upholds the entire structures of both knowledge and language."⁷⁸ The critic, it seems, is at the base as well as the summit of knowledge. Hegel thought he was insulting the Schlegel brothers by saying that they were critics rather than philosophers—but here Schlegel appropriates the highest task of culture for criticism.

Looking more closely at Schlegel's essay "On the Essence of Criticism," we get a better sense of what this critical grounding function entails. The essay is situated within a larger study of Lessing (which was dedicated to Fichte, as an example of the direction his work should take). Lessing is, Schlegel argues, the consummate critic. But the essay itself is a character sketch of Lessing—a critique of a critic. Indeed, Schlegel defines a critic as "an author to the second power"—the author of an author, someone who constructs the character of someone who constructs characters or, in the case of the philosopher, concepts; in either case, the constructor gets constructed.⁷⁹ In his study of Lessing, himself a critic, Schlegel is in fact an author raised to the third power. This is strictly in keeping with the task he set for Romanticism, which was to raise things "to ever higher powers."⁸⁰

But it is also in keeping with the Romantic themes of the infinitization of progress and the deferral of completion and comprehension. Criticism turns out to be knowledge's *Abgrund* rather than its *Grund*.

But another consequence follows from the critic's task of constructing character, of being the author of the author: it makes the author into a work, and forces him to undergo the indignity of a certain loss of reality. In short, he becomes poeticized.⁸¹ Schlegel once wrote that he would like criticism to construct new characters by "amalgamating" individuals—combining, for instance, the author Jean Paul with Peter Leberecht, an invention of Tieck's.⁸² Here characterization literally means being synthesized with a character, the real-life Jean Paul combined with the fictitious Leberecht. Unlike Derrida's deconstructive amalgamation of Hegel's works with those of Genet, a Romantic criticism of Hegel might think about combining Hegel himself with a character of Genet's (or with Genet himself, as a character of a critic like Sartre . . .). It is not the work that is at issue for Romantic criticism so much as the author *as* a work.

Schlegel's plan to amalgamate individuals is, of course, ironic. Technically, it is witty; wit is the Romantics' sister concept to irony, a faculty involving the sudden (literary) synthesis of opposites. As such, it brings us back into proximity with Hegel (according to Heidegger, who saw wit as the Romantic counterpart to Hegel's dialectic).⁸³ But again, we can note all the differences that prevent too facile a comparison of the two. This sort of witty construction of Hegel's character would not aim at clarification, comprehension, or rational development; it would rather serve to affirm and unleash incomprehensibility. We can recall Schlegel's manifesto: "We demand that the events, the people, in short, the whole game of life actually be taken up and presented as a game as well." This would be the fate of a characterized, poeticized Hegel; and it is clearly not a fate he would enjoy, even if we pointed out that "all the sacred games of art are only distant imitations of the infinite game of the world." Although the allusion here is clearly to Plato's *Symposium*, we have seen that Schlegel's rules of the game owe more to Aristophanes than to Socrates. That is, when it comes time to describe how beauty brings us closer to the absolute, we get a fanciful story of amalgamation rather than a solid ladder whose ascent requires effort and forbearance; we get *Lucinde* and not the *Phenomenology*.⁸⁴

As personally distasteful as Hegel might have found the Romantics, his attitude toward their theories is certainly overexaggerated. At the end of the day, they shouldn't be any more objectionable to him than as a particularly charismatic form of Kantianism (which is not to minimize the threat this might pose). For their part, the Romantics would certainly have been

unpersuaded by Hegel's speculative system, finding it more amusing than convincing. Perhaps the antagonism here is part of the quarrel, *already* ancient in Plato's time, between poetry and philosophy. For Hegel, philosophy completes poetry, it takes over and accomplishes the artistic goal of presenting the absolute. For the Romantics, on the other hand, poetry "incompletes" philosophy, it makes it into an ongoing project by critically constructing the character of the philosopher.

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, "Solgers nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel," in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 11, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–70), 234. (The Suhrkamp edition is hereafter cited as *Werke*.)

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 2:116. Hereafter cited as *VA*. (These three volumes also comprise vols. 13, 14, and 15 of the *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*.) All translations of passages in Hegel's *Ästhetik* are my own.

3. Emanuel Hirsch, *Die Beisetzung der Romantiker in Hegels Phänomenologie* (1924), cited in Ernst Behler, "Friedrich Schlegel und Hegel," *Hegel-Studien* (1963). Hirsch is citing Hegel's remarks from "Das Gewissen" in the final section of *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 205. Hegel lived in the same house with her for several years, after she married Schelling; see also Hegel, "Solgers nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel," 11:234.

5. Quoted in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 6.

6. Hegel, *VA* 1:92.

7. *Ibid.*, 1:99.

8. Maurice Blanchot makes this point too; see his essay "The Athenaeum," trans. Deborah Esch and Ian Balfour, in *Studies in Romanticism* 22 (1983): 168.

9. Hegel, *VA* 1:95.

10. *Ibid.*, 1:97.

11. See note 3.

12. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 275. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, 18:460.

13. Hegel, *VA* 1:97.

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke*, 7:317; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), addition to section 164.

15. Hegel, in *Werke*, 7:317; Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, addition to section 164.

16. David Farrell Krell, "Lucinde's Shame: Hegel, Sensuous Woman, and the Law," in *Feminist Interpretations of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

17. Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde*, in vol. 5 of *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1958–). (The *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe* is hereafter abbreviated as KA.) Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 52. All quotations from *Lucinde* will be from the Firchow translation.

18. Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 52.

19. P. Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Unpresentable," trans. Hugh J. Silverman, in *The Subject of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Trezise (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 139.

20. Friedrich Schlegel, "Gespräch über die Poesie," in KA 2:319; all translations from this text are my own.

21. Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 51.

22. Ibid.

23. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 17.

24. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), Schelling suggested that an aesthetic intuition could reveal the absolute; F. W. J. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1957), 286–87, 297. See note 45 below.

25. Paul de Man, "The Concept of Irony," in *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 168.

26. Friedrich Schlegel, "Critical Fragment" 42, in KA 2. Schlegel's "Critical Fragments," "Athenaeum Fragments," and "Ideas" cited in this essay are translated by Peter Firchow in *Lucinde and the Fragments* and are listed by fragment number.

27. Schlegel, "Critical Fragment" 108.

28. Friedrich Schlegel, "Über die Unverständlichkeit," in KA 2; Friedrich Schlegel, "On Incomprehensibility," in *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 268.

29. Schlegel, "On Incomprehensibility," 260.

30. Novalis, "Monolog," in *Novalis Schriften*, ed. Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl, and Gerhard Schulz, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960–), 2:672; Novalis, *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 83.

31. Schlegel, "Critical Fragment" 48.

32. De Man, "Concept of Irony," 181.

33. For arguments that Hegel misinterpreted Schlegel, see Rüdiger Bubner, "Zur dialektischen Bedeutung romantischer Ironie," in *Die Aktualität der Frühromantik*, ed. E. Behler and J. Hörisch (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1987), 85–95; see also my "Squaring the Romantic Circle: Hegel's Critique of Schlegel's Theories of Literature," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. William Maker (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

34. Friedrich Schlegel, "Philosophische Fragmente" 1048, in KA 18:283. All translations from the "Philosophische Fragmente" are my own.

35. Schlegel, "On Incomprehensibility," 269.

36. Ibid., 264.

37. Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment" 116.
38. Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment" 3.
39. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony*, 265.
40. Schlegel, "On Incomprehensibility," 264.
41. J. G. Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 399.
42. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in vol. 5 of *Kants Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1908–13); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 63–64.
43. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830). *Erster Teil: Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Werke*, 8:140; G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, trans. William Wallace (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 88. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, 3 vols. (New York: Humanities, 1963), 2:470.
44. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830). *Erster Teil: Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Werke*, 8:140; Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, 88.
45. But it is worth noting that the young Hegel at least nominally committed himself to an aesthetic philosophy in the 1790s, in the "Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism," a fragment(!) of disputed authorship: "The highest act of Reason, the one through which it encompasses all Ideas, is an Aesthetic act . . . ; the philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet" (see "Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism," in H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770–1801* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972], 511). This brings the early Hegel into some proximity with Romanticism. Schelling (another candidate author) did make a concerted attempt to carry through the project outlined in the fragment. This shows that it is not necessary for a speculative philosophy to abandon the primacy of the aesthetic, and Schelling maintained this primacy by elevating intuition to a speculative faculty, something to which the later Hegel was firmly and famously opposed.
46. Schlegel, "Gespräch über die Poesie," 323–24. Although the dialogue is a purely fictional work written by Friedrich Schlegel, the putative "identities" of the characters can be discerned; here, Antonio is F. Schlegel, Ludovico is Schelling, and Lothario is Novalis (see Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 89).
47. Novalis, *Novalis Schriften*, 3:686.
48. Novalis, "Logological Fragments 1," no. 66, in *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*.
49. Even the notion of "poetry" has been filtered through Kant; the Romantics were concerned to connect the notion of poetry (or "poesy") with its original etymological sense of *poesis* or production. (Schlegel's definition of Romantic poetry as "universal, progressive poetry" alludes to this.) And this allowed them to refer the notion of poetry to the Kantian problematic of the productive imagination which schematizes the categories, mediating between the a priori concepts of the understanding and sensibility. In other words, poetry is derived from the same creative faculty required to mediate between the sensible and the rational. See Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 132n7.

50. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 49; see also 76–77: “The foliage on borders or on wallpaper . . . are free beauties.”

51. Schlegel, “Gespräch über die Poesie,” 319.

52. Schlegel’s theory cannot be easily elided with Kant’s specific theory of poetry, which dwells on evocative concepts and not the sounds of words. Instead, the point of my comparison with Schlegel is Kant’s transcendental psychology of the imagination.

53. Hegel, *VA* 1:16.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*, 1:27.

56. *Ibid.*, 1:28.

57. David Farrell Krell, in his excellent discussion of abandonment in *Lucinde*, reminds us of this passage from the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel writes that for a thinker to ponder a matter (*die Sache*, a feminine noun) means “to linger with the matter in question and to forget himself in her . . . abandoning himself to her” (Krell, “Lucinde’s Shame,” 104).

58. Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 47.

59. Although this is clearly a departure from Kant, in that Kant thought that any metaphysical interest in the aesthetic will come from an experience of beautiful nature, not art.

60. Krell, “Lucinde’s Shame.” For similar readings, see Naomi Schor’s “Reading in Detail: Hegel’s Aesthetics and the Feminine” and Eric O. Clarke’s “Fetal Attraction: Hegel’s An-aesthetics of Gender” in *Feminist Interpretations of G. W. F. Hegel*.

61. Lacoue-Labarthe, “The Unpresentable,” 157.

62. Maurice Blanchot, *Sade et Restif de la Bretonne* (Brussels/Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1986).

63. Schlegel, *KA* 18:32.

64. Schlegel, “Athenaeum Fragment” 105.

65. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 77.

66. Schlegel, “Athenaeum Fragment” 53.

67. This point is well articulated by Joseph C. Flay in “Hegel, Derrida, and Bataille’s Laughter,” as well as by Judith Butler in her comments on Flay’s paper, both in *Hegel and His Critics*, ed. William Desmond (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 163–78.

68. Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, 7 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967–78), 1:1571; quoted by Robert L. Perkins in “Commentary on ‘Hegel and Kierkegaard,’” in *Hegel and His Critics*, 104–5.

69. See, for instance, the collection *Hegel After Derrida*, ed. Stuart Barnett (London: Routledge, 1998).

70. Derrida, *Positions*, 40–41.

71. Although in fact the Krell and Lacoue-Labarthe articles cited above both avoid this pitfall and offer valuable and carefully nuanced analyses.

72. Novalis, “Logological Fragments 1,” no. 66, in *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*.

73. Schlegel, *KA* 2:304.
74. Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment" 56.
75. Friedrich Schlegel, "Vom Wesen der Kritik," in *Lessings Gedanken und Meinungen*, in *KA* 3:60 (my translation).
76. Schlegel, "Vom Wesen der Kritik," 3:60.
77. Novalis makes similar remarks; see Novalis, *Novalis Schriften*, 2:534.
78. Schlegel, "Vom Wesen der Kritik," 3:55.
79. Schlegel, "Philosophische Fragmente" 927, in *KA* 18:106.
80. Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment" 116.
81. Bearing in mind that "poeticization" means "production." See note 49 above.
82. Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment" 125.
83. Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 82. See also Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 53: wit "is constituted in the greatest proximity to what Hegel will call 'Absolute Knowledge.'"
84. And Aristophanes is an amalgamation himself, according to Schlegel: he is "simultaneously Homer and Archilochus" (Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragment" 156).

Index

- absolute, 296, 322
 - knowing, knowledge, 297, 326, 336
 - spirit, xiv, 178, 271, 280
 - abstraction, abstractness, xxv, 21, 61–62, 64, 68, 82, 123, 244–46, 249, 259, 262–63
 - abstractionism, 220
 - acropolis, 44
 - Adorno, Theodor W., xi–xii, xxv, 142, 184, 187, 197–98, 209, 212, 216, 218, 233–37, 240, 242–43, 264–65, 288, 290
 - Aesthetic Theory*, xi, 216, 288
 - Aegina, 87
 - Aeschylus, xii, 174, 327
 - The Eumenides*, 160–61, 164, 170–71, 182
 - The Libation Bearers*, 150
 - Oresteia*, 156, 161, 170
 - Prometheus Bound*, 327
 - Seven Against Thebes*, 147, 160, 171
 - aesthetic
 - experience, 321–22, 325
 - ideal, 147, 149, 163, 168
 - individuality, 168
 - intuition, 333
 - judgment, 7, 296
 - taste, 190
 - aesthetics, xxiii
 - Agamemnon, 161
 - agency, agents, 4–5, 7–9, 12
 - sociality of, 7
 - aloofness, 27, 74–75
 - American “Western,” 20
 - Ando, Tadao, 49–50
 - animals, 4–5, 11, 24, 68
 - Annales school, 192
 - Antigone, 16–17, 149–56, 158–60, 162, 164, 172, 316
 - antinomies, 320
 - Anzio Girl*, 85
 - Aphrodite, 65, 67, 75
 - Aphrodite* (from Parthenon), 67
 - Cnidian Aphrodite*, 70, 75, 83, 86
 - See also Venus de’ Medici*
 - Apollo, 66, 72, 75, 160, 170
 - Apollo Belvedere*, 69, 76, 83
 - Apollo Sauroktonos*, 70, 83
 - Tiber Apollo*, 58, 69
 - arabesques, 60, 121, 143, 324
 - Arab poetry, xxiii
 - arbitrariness, 228–29, 231, 234, 242–43
 - arbitrary will (*Willkür*), 6
 - arch, 45
 - archaic smile, 73
 - Archilochus, 336
 - architecture, xvii, xxiv, 29–31, 37–38, 43–44, 51, 59, 68, 72, 96–97, 120, 129, 170, 194
 - Baroque, 45
 - beginning of, 33, 35
 - classical, 31, 33–37, 39, 43, 46, 52, 60
 - contemporary, 46, 186
 - Corinthian, 37
 - Doric, 37
 - French, 45
 - Gothic, 60
 - Ionic, 37
 - non-Western, 45
 - Renaissance, 45
 - Roman, 45
 - romantic, 31, 36, 38–42, 44, 46, 50
 - symbolic, xxiv, 31–36, 38–39, 43–44, 46, 52, 54, 79–80, 82, 89
- architrave, 37, 53
 - Aristophanes, 331, 336
 - Aristotle, 15, 119, 122, 146, 156–59, 174, 303
 - Arkas, 176
 - art(s), xvi, 4, 8–9, 11, 21, 29, 37, 43, 56, 59,

- 95–96, 146, 184, 191, 201, 233, 236,
250, 271, 273–74, 296, 325
- abstract, xxv
- autonomy of, xxi, 272
- conceptual, 26
- division of, 98, 102
- end of, xi, xxii, xxv, 4, 20, 22, 50, 179,
181, 189, 196, 216, 219, 223, 246, 255,
272, 282, 288
- enigmaticalness, opacity of, 219, 237–
38, 243
- forms of, stages of (*Kunstformen*), 30–
31, 98, 102–3
- function, purpose of, xvi, xxiii–xxiv,
56–57
- future of, xxii, xxv, 79, 185–86, 196–97,
206, 212
- highest vocation of, xx
- individual, 102–3
- Japanese, 102
- need for, 224, 226, 246
- not imitation of nature, 60, 95–96
- pastness of, 102, 183, 186, 191, 203–4,
245
- postclassical, 180, 197
- representational, 249, 254, 259
- See also* Egypt: art; Greek: art; modern:
art
- Artemis, 60, 176
- Artemis of Gabii*, 70, 83–84
- See also* Diana
- art history, 186, 190
- artwork(s), xv, 93–94, 195, 201, 221, 237
- animation of, 217, 232
- artworld, 199
- Aspasia*, 73
- Athena, 65–66, 161, 164, 176
- Athena Velletri*, 58, 69, 83
- autonomy of art and the aesthetic, xxi,
272–73, 300
- Babbitt, Milton, 140
- Bacchus, 70, 75, 85, 182
- See also* Dionysus
- Bach, Johann Sebastian, xiii, 137
- St. Matthew Passion*, xiii, 137
- Bacon, Helen H., 171
- bars in music, 136
- Bartok, Bela, 141–42
- Baudelaire, Charles, 225, 256, 290
- Baumgarten, Alexander, xi
- Aesthetica*, xi
- Beardsworth, Sarah, 241
- beauty, xv–xvi, xix, xxiii–xxiv, xxvii, 9, 11,
14, 35–36, 38, 57, 98–100, 112, 179,
217, 257, 264, 273, 323–25
- classical, 17, 37–38, 58
- ideal, 56, 58, 69–71, 74–75, 77–78
- of inwardness, xx
- musical, 121
- natural, 11, 112, 217, 235–37, 251, 254
- sculptural, 57–58, 61, 68, 70
- secular, xxi
- sensuous, 57, 66
- Beckett, Samuel, 198
- Play*, 242
- Beethoven, Ludwig van, 124, 137–39, 145,
179, 243
- being, xiii
- being-for-self, 4
- Belting, Hans, 185–86, 201
- Benjamin, Walter, 225, 263–64
- Berlioz, Hector, 141
- Bernini, Gian Lorenzo, 67, 85
- St. Teresa and an Angel with a Lance*, 58
- Bernstein, J. M., xxv, 267
- Besançon, Alain, 253
- Biedermeier, 189, 196
- Blanchot, Maurice, 327, 332
- blindness
- of sculpture, 64, 84–85
- of tragic hero, 158
- Blond Boy*, 73
- body, xvii, xix, 58, 60, 107
- Bois, Yves-Alain, xxv, 216, 218, 226–30,
233, 240–41, 243
- Boisserée collection, 107
- Bowie, Andrew, 288
- Boyle, Nicholas, 165, 176
- Bradley, A. C., 171
- Brancusi, Constantin, 78, 80
- Adam and Eve*, 81, 89
- Endless Column*, 81
- Brandom, Robert, 10, 24
- bronze, 62
- Bubner, Rüdiger, xxv
- buildings in outer space, 49
- Bungay, Stephen, 173, 196
- burial of traitors, 152
- Butler, Judith, 335

- cadenced interjection, xxiv, 135, 141–42
 Cage, John, 141
 Calder, Alexander, 60
 Calvin, Jean, 266
 Calvinism, 283
 caprice, 132
 carnation, 113–15, 118
 Carroll, Noël, 212–13
 caryatids, 38
 catharsis, 124, 159
 cathedral, 42, 45
 Catholic art, xxvii
 Causey, Andrew, 80
 caves, 34
 Cézanne, Paul, 89, 212, 227, 261
 children, 65
 Chinese, xviii
 chorus, 148, 153, 171
 Christian art, 22, 274
 Christian religion, Christianity, xiv–xv,
 xx, 4, 17–19, 182, 250, 274, 280, 283,
 297, 300
 churches, 35
 Gothic, 39
 Clark, Kenneth, 86
 Clark, T. J., 184, 208–9, 216, 248, 264, 266,
 268, 270
 classical
 art, xix, 14, 17–18, 41, 43–44, 57–58, 74,
 98–99, 101, 129, 185, 194–95, 203
 beauty, 17, 37–38, 58
 Classical Style in music, 119, 135, 137–39,
 141
 clothing in sculpture, 314
 See also drapery
 Clytemnestra, 150, 158, 162
 Coleridge, Samuel T., 189
 Collenberg, Bernadette, 118
 Collingwood, R. G., 181, 195, 211
 Cologne cathedral, 40, 48
 color, xvii, xxiii–xxiv, 61–62, 64, 88, 90,
 92, 94, 96–97, 101, 108–13, 115, 118,
 198, 204, 232, 235, 239, 270
 coloring (*Kolorit*), 90, 92, 109–10, 113, 118
 column, 35, 37–39, 41–42, 44
 half-, 38
 comedy, 22, 168, 178, 210, 313
 commitment, 7, 24
 composers, 134
 concept, 64, 86, 278
 concrete, concreteness, 68, 71–72
 Cone, Edward T., 119, 122–23
 conflict(s), 16, 58, 60, 71, 147, 154
 consciousness
 right of, 157
 construction, 330
 Constructivism, 198
 content, xvii, 12–13, 32, 51, 106, 109, 115–
 18, 120–21, 127, 132, 138–39, 185,
 189, 197, 199
 convention, 230–32
 Copland, Aaron, 141–42
 Correggio, xiii, xx, 103–4
 Holy Night, xiii
 Creon, 16, 147, 150–56, 158–60, 162, 164,
 171–72
 Creuzer, Georg Friedrich, 54, 117, 184
 critic, criticism, 329–31
 Croce, Benedetto, 181, 207
 Crumb, George, 141
 Cubism, 198, 219–20, 261
 cultus, 304, 307

 Dada, 211
 Daguerre, Louis-Jacques-Mandé, 225
 Dahlhaus, Carl, 132, 135, 137–39
 Damisch, Hubert, 186–87, 206, 209
 dance, 103, 145
 Danto, Arthur, xxv, 180–81, 196, 199–202,
 211, 213–14, 216, 218, 220–27, 239
 David, Jacques-Louis, 266
 Davies, Stephen, 122, 124, 213
 Davis, Walter, 290
 Debussy, Claude, 141
 deconstruction, 328–29
 decree, 153, 172
 ambiguity in Creon's, 153
 deferral, 319–20, 331
 Degas, Edgar
 Dancer Fastening the String of Her Tights, 80
 Deianeira, 174
 de Kooning, Willem, 258
 Delaroche, Paul, 225
 de Man, Paul, 316, 318
 dematerialization, 49
 de Meuron, Pierre, 50
 De Quincey, Thomas, 187, 206
 deretinalization thesis, 223
 Derrida, Jacques, 51, 185, 327–29, 331
 de Sade, Marquis, 327

- Descartes, René, 217
 desire, 93–94
 deus ex machina, 164–66
 development
 in music, 135
 of sculpture, 69
 Devrient, Therese, 145
 Diamond, David, 141
 Diana, 60, 165
 Diane Chasseresse, 83–84
 See also Artemis
 Diderot, Denis,
 Essay on Painting, 118
 Rameau's Nephew, 262
 dignity, 235
 Dionysus, 72, 88, 171
 See also Bacchus
 disease, 10
 disenchantment, 265
 dissolution of modern art, 21–22
 dissonance, 145, 243
 divine, xvii, xix–xxi, 21, 56, 58, 250, 260
 Dodds, E. R., 173
 dolphins, 5
 Donougho, Martin, xxv, 172
 drama, dramatic art, 58, 60, 168
 modern, 19, 22
 drapery, 66–67, 85
 wet, 67
 See also clothing in sculpture
 drawing, 90, 96, 111–12, 118
Dresden Zeus, 58, 69, 83
 Dubuffet, Jean, 186–87, 209
 Duchamp, Marcel, 186, 209, 219, 228–29,
 231, 233, 241
 Dürer, Albrecht, 77
 Dutch art, painting, xxi, xxiii, 45, 58,
 107–10, 115, 256, 289
 Dyck, Anthony van, 107

 eccentricity, 98
 of painting, xxiv, 97, 101, 105, 115
 economimesis, 185, 195
 Egypt, Egyptian
 architecture, 33, 180
 art, xviii, 13, 73, 117, 180
 sculpture, 63, 68, 73, 79, 99
 temple, 33–34, 44, 50
 Eisenman, Peter, 49
 Eldridge, Richard, xxiv

 Elgin marbles, 74, 87
 Elliott, R. K., 134
 Empson, William, 182, 189
 end
 of art, xi, xxii, xxv, 4, 20, 22, 50, 179,
 181, 189, 196, 216, 219, 223, 246, 255,
 272, 282, 288
 of religion, 282
 Enlightenment, 283–84
 epic, xxii
 epigraph, 188–89
 Eros, 65
Erscheinung, 273
 essence, 209, 273
 Eteocles, 147, 150, 161, 171
 eternal justice, 16
 ethical life, 148, 168, 178, 252
 substantial, 303
 Eucharist, 283
 Euripides, xii, 174–75
 Iphigenia in Aulis, 170
 Iphigenia in Tauris, 164, 176
 Eurydice, 151, 153
 everyday, xxi, 77, 218
 evil, 312
 experience, 302
 Expressionism, 198, 213, 220
 externality, external matter, 17, 30, 43
 Eyck, Jan van, xiii, xx, xxiii
 eyes, 63–64, 84–85, 100, 114, 251

 fact of reason, 6
 fall of drapery, 66–67
 family, 147–48, 160
 fear, 158
 feminine themes in music, 126
 Ferry, Luc, 266, 268
 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 28
 Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 296, 306, 310,
 312, 316, 320–21, 327, 329
 finitude, 170, 321
 Flay, Joseph C., 335
 flesh, 113–14, 118
 flourishing (*eudaimonia*), 15
 fluidity, 65
 folds, 67
 Ford, John, 20
 forgiveness, 167–68, 177
 drama of, 167
 form, xvii, 12–13, 90–92, 96–97, 198

- formalism, 214, 263
 in music, 119, 121–22, 130
 Foster, Norman, 46
 Foucault, Michel, 193
 freedom, xiv, xix, xxi, 9, 21, 56, 59–60,
 81–82, 128, 167, 169, 217, 258–60
 aesthetic presentation of, 14
 classical, 15
 Frege, Gottlob, 199
 French Revolution, 271, 305, 310
 Fried, Michael, 248–49, 259, 264, 268
 Friedrich von Homburg, Prince, 171
 Frye, Northrop, 214
 Fukuyama, Francis, 299
 Fullerton, Mark, 88
 function, 35–36, 38
 Furies, 160–61, 164, 170–71

 Gadamer, Hans-Georg, xi
 Galilei, Vincenzo, 130, 144
 gardens, 53
 Gehry, Frank, 46, 48
 Gellrich, Michelle, 174
 Genet, Jean, 329, 331
 genius, 7, 187, 254–55
 gesture, 123
 Gethmann-Siefert, Annemarie, 111–12,
 204, 214–15, 308
 Geuss, Raymond, 272, 292
 Gilmore, Jonathan, 213–14
 Glass, Philip, 141
 Gluck, Christoph Willibald, xii
 God, xiv, 19, 280–81, 299
 gods (classical, Greek), xviii–xix, 15, 18,
 26, 72, 147–48
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, xii, xxiii,
 20, 38, 45, 54, 72, 118, 135, 179, 203,
 310, 329
 Iphigenie auf Tauris, 164–66, 168, 177
 West-östlicher Divan, 188
 Gombrich, Ernst, 190
 Goodman, Nelson, 199
 Gothic, 42, 53
 cathedral, 40–42, 46–47, 49, 54
 church, 39
 pillar, 38, 41–42
 Greece, Greeks, 101, 180, 182
 Greek
 art, xviii–xx, 11, 256
 civilization, culture, 18, 307
 conception of freedom, humanity, xix,
 17
 dramatists, 148
 gods, xviii–xix, 15, 18, 26, 72, 147–48
 heroes, 26, 147
 profile, 67
 religion, xviii–xx
 sculpture, xvii, xx, 36, 62, 72, 99, 185
 temple, 36, 39–42, 44, 46, 48–50, 53, 197
 theology, 300
 tragedy, 16, 58, 147–50, 155, 159, 162–
 63, 185
 virtue, 26
 Greenberg, Clement, 213, 224, 227, 231,
 238, 248, 262–64, 267–68, 270
 Greenough, Horatio, 88
 Griesheim, Karl Gustav Julius von, 187
 groups in sculpture, 70
 Gurney, Edmund, 121–22, 134

 Habermas, Jürgen, 299
 Haemon, 150–52, 154, 156, 160
hamartia, 158
 Hamlet, 170, 174–75
 Hammermeister, Kai, xii
 handedness, 227
 Hanslick, Eduard, 119–22
 Hanson, Duane, 64
 harmony, 16–17, 159, 167, 169
 in music, 136–37
 Harries, Karsten, 55
 Haydn, Joseph, 137–38
 Hayoz, Nicolas, 210
 Hazlitt, William, 76
 Hebel, Johann Peter, 235
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich
 Aesthetics, xii, 93, 98, 102–3, 106, 108–
 11, 118, 127, 179, 188–91, 194, 204,
 206, 272–75, 278, 283, 289, 298
 dialectical method, 328
 “Earliest System-Programme of Ger-
 man Idealism,” xi, 296, 300–301,
 334
 Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,
 xii, 23, 102, 191, 204, 214, 297–98
 Faith and Knowledge, 285
 historicizing approach of, 302
 idealism of, 242, 251
 Jenaer Realphilosophie, 182
 lectures on aesthetics, xii, 3–4, 19, 22,

- 59, 61, 85, 87, 90, 101–2, 116, 167, 169,
176, 179, 204, 304, 312, 325
*Lectures on the Philosophy of World His-
tory*, 190
as Lutheran, xv
and modernity, xxv, 244, 277, 283
Natural Law essay, 182
Phenomenology of Spirit, xii, xxv, 7, 10, 15,
23, 25, 55, 127–28, 134, 144, 169, 176,
178, 182–83, 188, 196, 208, 210, 241,
262, 297–98, 301–2, 304, 306–8, 311–
12, 315, 323, 329, 331, 335
Philosophy of Religion, 274, 278, 281, 283,
293
Philosophy of Right, 128, 178, 303, 313
The Positivity of the Christian Religion, 284
Science of Logic, 10, 51, 144, 209, 322
speculative philosophy of, 3
The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate, 284
theology of, 253
theory, understanding of tragedy, 155–
56, 172
theory of agency, 5
transcripts of lectures, xii
travels, xii–xiii, 45, 69, 83, 101–2, 107,
117
wide reading, xi–xii
Hegelianism, 240
Heidegger, Martin, xi, 48, 198, 207, 222,
239, 259–60, 264, 331
The Origin of the Work of Art, 179, 216, 239
Heine, Heinrich, xiii
Hellenistic art, sculpture, 75–78, 85, 88
Heller, Erich, 165–66
Hemsterhuis, Franciscus, 296
Henrich, Dieter, 181, 183, 196–99, 202–3,
205, 207, 211–12, 264, 269
Hera, 65
Heracles, 65, 160–61
Herder, Johann Gottfried von, 62–63, 65,
193
hero, heroism, 15, 26, 146, 149, 158, 163,
167–68, 170, 182
Herodotus, 46, 52, 117
Herwitz, Daniel, 213
Herzog, Jacques, 50
Hesiod, 18
Hilmer, Brigitte, 203, 211, 213
Hippolytus, 175
Hirsch, Emanuel, 332
Hirt, Alois, 45–46, 54, 205
The History of Ancient Architecture, 46
historicism, 214
history, xiii–xiv, 11, 190–91, 210, 242
of art, 31, 51, 192, 245
axiological, 192–93, 210
pure, 192–93
Hoffmann, E. T. A., 137
Hölderlin, Friedrich, xi, 256, 296–97,
300–301
Holy Spirit, xiv
blasphemy, sin against, 167
Homer, xix, 18, 184, 336
Horowitz, Gregg, 187, 208–9, 213, 238–39
horse, 72
Hotho, Heinrich Gustav, xii, 90, 106, 111–
12, 196, 204, 249
Houlgate, Stephen, 117, 181, 207, 214,
238, 240, 263, 265, 270
Hovhanness, Alan, 141
Huhn, Tom, 213, 239
human beings, xiii, xix, 56
human life
purpose of, xiv
humanism, 250
Humanus, xxiii, xxviii, 21, 188, 203, 205,
208
Humboldt, Wilhelm von, 135, 308
humor, 55, 203
objective, 188–89, 204–5
subjective, 187
icons, 286
Idea (*Idee*), xiv, 9, 13, 222, 252, 255, 281
Platonic, 301
Ideal (*Ideal*), xix, 11, 14–15, 26, 43, 180,
194
classical, Greek, 182, 185, 188, 195
See also aesthetic: ideal
ideal
beauty, 56, 58, 69–71, 74–75, 77–78
sculpture, 63, 70
Ilissos, 75, 87
imagination, 91, 123, 278, 326, 334–35
imitation, 60, 95–96
Impressionist painting, 109
incarnation, xiv, 226, 240, 274
incomprehensibility, 237, 243, 317–20,
327, 331
India, Indians, xviii, 190

- indiscernibility thesis, 223
 individual, individuality, xvii, 14, 26, 139,
 146, 149, 159, 168
 intelligence, 93
 intensionality, 222
 intuition (*Anschauung*), 278, 334
 aesthetic, 333
 inwardness, xx, 17–18, 27, 77, 100–101,
 105, 117–18, 203, 264, 271
 Iphigenia, Iphigenie, 164–66, 168, 176–77
 irony, 55, 187, 203, 312–13, 316, 318, 320,
 323, 331
 Islam, Islamic art, xvii, 74
 iteration, 230

 Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich, 306
 Jaeschke, Walter, 204
 James, Henry, 258, 263
 James, William, 324
 Jameson, Fredric, 180
 Jankélevitch, Victor, 186
 Jason, 65
 Jean Paul, 331
 Jesus Christ, xx, 142, 167, 188
 Jocasta, 158
 Johns, Jasper, 212
 Johnson, Julian, 134
 Judaism, xvii, 74
 judgments of taste, 204, 321
 Juliet, 175
 justice, 16, 159–61, 163, 174–75

 Kabakov, Ilya, 209
 Kandinsky, Wassily, 212, 220, 244
 Kant, Immanuel, xi–xii, xvi, 6–7, 74, 91,
 93, 190, 217, 237, 242, 251–52, 254–
 55, 257–60, 262, 264, 269, 271, 273,
 281, 296, 300–301, 311, 320–26, 330,
 334–35
 Critique of Judgment, xi–xii, xvi, 7, 90,
 266–67, 300
 Kantian paradox, 6–7, 14, 21, 24
 Keats, John, 203
 Kemal, Salim, xxvi
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 219, 259, 313, 320,
 326, 328
 Kivy, Peter, 119, 122–23
 Klein, Yves, 212
 Kleist, Heinrich von
 Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, 171

 Knoll, Kordelia, 83, 87
 Kodály, Zoltán, 142
 Kolb, David, xxiv
 Koolhaas, Rem, 49
 kore, kouroi, 73
 Koselleck, Reinhart, 193
 Koyré, Alexandre, 192
 Kramer, Lawrence, 126
 Krauss, Rosalind, 216
 Krell, David F., 326–28, 335
 Kristeva, Julia, 241
 Kuhn, Thomas S., 192

 labor, 316
 Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, 315, 326–28,
 335
 Laius, 158
 landscape painting, 251
 Lang, Beryl, 213
 language, 123, 304, 317–18, 327–28
 ordinary, 209
Laocoön, 58, 60, 71, 76–77, 83
 Lasson, Georg, 186
 Laugier, Marc-Antoine (Abbé), 34, 52
 Law, Stephen C., 178
 laziness, 315, 322
 Lear, Jonathan, 25
 Leberecht, Peter, 331
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 320
 Leonardo da Vinci, xiii, 104
 Lepenies, Wolf, 292
 Lesky, Albin, 151–53
 Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, xi, 330
 Laocoön, 239
 letting go, 155, 164, 168
 Levinas, Emmanuel, 285
 Levinson, Jerrold, 119, 124
 life, 10, 24
 light, 287
 lingam, 33
 Lochner, Stefan, xiii
 Dombild, xiii
 Locke, John, 244
 love, xx, 19–20, 23, 58, 77, 187, 203, 256,
 270, 289, 297, 313, 316
 Ludwig I of Bavaria, 87
 Luhmann, Niklas, 189, 191, 210
 Lukács, Georg, 195, 290
 luster, 114
 Lutherans, xx

- lyric poet, 123
 Lysippos, 66, 76
- Macbeth, 162–64, 170, 175
 Mahler, Gustav, 141
 Malevich, Kasimir S., 244
 mannerism, 76
 Marcuse, Herbert, 270
 marriage, 313
 Marx, A. B., 135
 Marx, Karl, 225, 264
 masculine themes in music, 126
 master/slave, 8, 15
 materiality, 48, 94, 97, 185, 231, 262
 Matisse, Henri, 78, 80, 89, 236
 The Red Studio, 236
 Maus, Fred Everett, 119, 124–25, 143
 McClary, Susan, 125–26, 144
 McCumber, John, 208, 293
 meaning, 30, 49, 191, 234
 media events, 195
 mediation, 180, 182, 197–98
 Meier, Richard, 46
 melody, 122, 136–37
 Memling, Hans, xxiii
 memnons, 79
 Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, xiii, 137, 179, 206
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 128
 Messiaen, Olivier, 141
 metaphor, 221
 Meyer, Leonard, 125, 139–40
 Michelangelo
 Pietà, 77
 Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig, 46
 mindedness, 11, 25, 217–18
 minimalism, 219–22, 243, 268
 in music, 141
 Minutoli, General H. von, 73
 mobiles, 60
 modern
 art, xxi, 11, 19–23, 26, 186, 276–77
 drama, 19, 22
 era, life, world, xiv, 3, 5, 184, 276, 298
 painters, 48
 modernism, modernist art, 197–99, 209, 220–21, 225–26, 233–37, 242, 248, 258, 262, 272, 290
 modernity, xxv, 226, 244, 272, 283
 experience of, 277
- Mondrian, Piet, 228–29, 233, 236, 238, 243–44
 Monte Cavallo, 71
 Montesquieu, Baron de, 304
 Monteverdi, Claudio, 125, 144
 Moore, Henry, 81
 Morris, William, 208
 mourning, 15, 27, 240
 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, xii, 137–38
 The Magic Flute, xii
 music, xvii, xxi, xxiv, 38, 97, 115–16, 119–23, 126, 129–33, 170
 absolute, 132, 141
 aleatoric, 141
 ambient, 141
 electronic, 130
 frozen, 38, 49, 53
 instrumental, 131–32
 Javanese Gamelan, 141
 medieval, 130
 objective, xxiii
 postmedieval, 130
 rock, 141
 and text, 131–32, 137–39
- Myron
 Diskobolos, 70
 myth, 12, 14
- Nancy, Jean-Luc, 102
 Napoleon, 33
 Natalie, Princess, 171
 nature, 10, 37, 217, 236–37, 252, 262
 dead, 218, 232, 234, 238
 impotence of, 10
 Nazarenes, 185
 negative, negativity, 5, 316, 320
 nemesis, 159, 174
 “neo” architectural styles, 45
 neoclassical, xxii, 77, 185
 neo-Gothic, xxii
 Neoptolemus, 161, 174
Nereids from Xanthos, 67
 Nessus, 174
 new, 225
 Newman, Barnett, 229–30, 238
 Niethammer, Friedrich Immanuel, 51
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, xi, 173, 175, 260, 262, 264
 nihilism, 317, 320, 326
Nike Paionios, 67

- nineteenth-century fashion, 67
 Niobe, Niobids, 60, 71, 83
 nominalism, 229
 nonidentity, 288, 290
 Norman, Judith, xxv
 normativity, norms, 6–7, 22, 262
 Nouwen, Henri, 286–87
 Novalis, 310, 317–18, 323, 329, 334, 336
 novel, xxii, 23, 45, 289
 realist, 277
 nudity, 65
 Nuremberg goose-seller, 77
 Nussbaum, Martha, 152–54, 157

 obelisk, 33, 79
 Ockenden, R. C., 165
 Odysseus, 161
 Oedipus, 16–17, 157–58, 162, 164, 173, 177
 Oelmüller, Willi, 211
 one-sidedness, 149, 155–56, 159, 162
 opacity, 225, 227, 231–32, 237, 242
 opera, xii, 103, 125, 131, 204
 ordinary, 47, 276
 experience, 289
 Orestes, 150, 158, 160–61, 164, 174, 177
 Origen, 183
 Othello, 163, 175

 Pachelbel's Canon, 131
 painting, xvii, xxiv, 57–58, 64, 68, 90, 92–96, 101, 103–16, 118, 120, 129–30, 220, 239, 244, 251, 287
 eccentricity of, xxiv, 97, 101, 105, 115
 future of, 116
 German, 103–4
 Italian Renaissance, 109
 as medium, 232
 romantic, 101
 pantheism, 12
 Parthenon, 58, 67, 72, 79, 85, 87
 Hebe (Figure G), 58
 horse's head, 72
 Ilissos, 75, 87
 particularity, xxv, 274, 283, 291
 Pascal, Blaise, 266
 passion, 162, 175
 pastness of art, 102, 183, 186, 191, 203–4, 245
 pastoral, 182–83, 195

 pathos, 147, 149
 Pattison, George, 288
 Pavel, Thomas, 263
 Pei, I. M., 46
 Perseus, 65
 Persian poetry, xxiii
 perspective
 atmospheric, 112, 118
 geometrical, 118
 linear, 111–12
 Phaedra, 175
 Pheidias, 74–75, 78
 Athena Parthenos, 58, 62
 Olympian Zeus, 58, 62
 phenomenology, 297
 method of, 302
 Philoctetes, 161, 164, 177
 philosophy, xiv–xv, xxi, 4, 8, 11, 30, 56, 64, 182–83, 191, 220, 248, 272, 278, 280, 282, 284–85, 289, 332
 modern, 258
 photography, 225–26
 Picasso, Pablo, 78, 80, 89, 228–29, 242
 Guitar, 228
 Head of a Woman, 65
 Musical Instrument, 81
 pietism, 280–81
 Pinkard, Terry, xxiv, 263, 308
 Pippin, Robert B., xxv, 24, 27, 129, 238
 pity, 158
 plasticity, 175
 Plato, 122, 220, 242, 296, 301
 Laws, 117
 Symposium, 331
 Platonism, 296
 play (*Schauspiel*), 164, 166, 168
 play (*Spiel*), playfulness, 315–16, 318, 321–22, 324, 326
 pleasure in Greek tragedy, 160
 Pliny the Elder, 85
 Plotinus, 183, 265
 pluralism, 202
 in music, 140
 poeticization, 336
 poetry, xvii, xix, 57, 64, 68, 94, 96–97, 120, 129, 139, 146, 315, 319, 324, 329, 332, 334–35
 Pollitt, J. J., 85, 88
 Pollock, Jackson, 227, 241–44, 258, 262
 polychromy, 84

- Polykleitos, 66, 74, 78, 86
 Doryphoros, 70, 86
 Knucklebone Players, 70, 86
 Polyneices, 150–53, 155, 171, 177
 Pop art, 201, 219–23, 226, 239, 268
 portraiture, xxi, 78, 88
 positive, positivity, 284, 320
 positivism, 28
 Post-Impressionism, 261
 postmodernism, 268, 290–91
 postromantic art, 276–77
 powers, 330
 practices, 128
 Praxiteles, 66, 75, 78, 88
 Apollo Sauroktonos, 70, 83
 Cnidian Aphrodite, 70, 75, 83, 86
 Pouring Satyr, 72, 75, 83
 profile in sculpture, xvii, 67–68
 property, 52
 prose, 47
 Protestant art, 265
 Protestantism, xx–xxii, 271, 274–75, 283
 Proust, Marcel, 198, 258, 262–63
 psychotherapy, 286
 pyramids, 34, 52, 197

 quoting, 222

 Racine, Jean, 175
 Raphael, xiii, xx, 104, 109–10, 186
 Sistine Madonna, xiii, 103
 Rameau, Jean-Philippe, 137
 Raoul-Rochette, 117
 rationalism, 280
 rational-mindedness, 225, 232, 239
 Rauch, Christian Daniel, 88
 Rauschenberg, Robert, 212
 Read, Herbert, 56, 60, 82, 89
 realism, 187, 276, 289–90
 reason, 324
 in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, 298
 in tragedy, 159–60, 163–64
Rechtsstaat, 307
 recognition, 210
 mutual, reciprocal, 7, 168, 178, 229
 struggle for, 7
 recollection, 133
 reconciliation, xxviii, 4, 159–60, 163, 169,
 278–79
 Reed, T. J., 165

 reflection, 21, 189, 197, 258, 320
 reflexivity, 199
 Reformation, xx–xxi
 Reich, Steve, 141
 Reinhold, Karl Leonhard, 320
 religion, xiv–xv, xxi, 8, 21–22, 28, 56, 146,
 185, 191, 250, 265, 271, 278–81, 296
 artificial, 299
 natural, 299–300
 religion of art (*Kunst-Religion*), xii, xxv,
 188, 297–99, 303–7
 Rembrandt, xiii, xxi, 107
 Night Watch, xiii, 107
 The Prodigal Son, 286–87
 repetition, 230–32, 241
 repose, 15, 69–70, 73, 75
 representation, 51, 199, 202
 representation (*Vorstellung*), 269, 271–72,
 274, 278, 287, 290, 292
 rest, 60
 retrospective drawing of distinctions, 194
 retrospectivity, 210
 revelation, 274
 revolution, xiv
 rhetoric, 190
 rhythm, 136
 Richard III, 163
 Roche, M. W., 151, 177
 Rodchenko, Alexander M., 228, 233, 236
 Rodin, Auguste, 60, 89
 Roman profile, 68
 Romans, 45, 101
 Romantic, 39, 252
 art, 40, 180
 conception of art, 195
 creativity, 196
 irony, 187, 313, 316, 318
 poetry, 319
 reflection, 181
 symbol, 189
 romantic art, xx, 18–20, 39, 42–43, 47, 57,
 77–78, 99–100, 129, 185, 187, 195,
 203, 214, 256, 275
 dissolution of, 187, 275, 287
 Romanticism, 194, 208, 254, 290, 310–13,
 317, 323, 326–30
 in music, 141
 Romantics, xxiii, 296, 311, 320, 322
 Hegel's critique of, 316
 roof, 39

- Rorem, Ned, 142
 Rose, Gillian, 240, 289, 293
 Rossi, Aldo, 186
 Rossini, Gioacchino, xii
 Barber of Seville, xii
 Rothko, Mark, 244, 247, 262
 Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 136, 256
 Rubens, Peter Paul, xxvii
 Rückert, Friedrich, 188, 203
 Rumohr, Carl Friedrich von, 205, 215
 Ruskin, John, 186
 Ryman, Robert, 227–33, 238, 240–43
- Sallis, John, xxiv
 Santner, Eric, 263
 Sartre, Jean Paul, 259, 331
 satyrs, 72
 Scharnhorst, General Gerhard Johann
 von, 78, 88
 Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von,
 xi, 53, 118, 189, 252, 265, 296, 298,
 300–301, 310, 315, 320, 322, 327, 330,
 332–34
 Schiller, Friedrich, xi–xii, xv, xxvii, 20,
 182, 252, 264–65, 297, 306, 316
 On the Aesthetic Education of Man, xi, 264
 Schinkel, Karl Friedrich, 45, 54, 205
 Schlegel, August Wilhelm, 151, 154, 310
 Elegies, 318
 Schlegel, Caroline, 310–11, 329, 332
 Schlegel, Dorothea, 310
 Schlegel, Friedrich, 53–54, 187, 262, 296,
 310–20, 323, 327–31, 334–36
 Dialogue on Poetry, 322
 On the Essence of Criticism, 330
 On Incomprehensibility, 311
 Lucinde, 311, 313–18, 323–27, 331
 theory of poetry, 315
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst,
 xiii, 296, 308, 310
 Schmidt, Dennis J., 174
 scholar, 183
 Scholem, Gershom, 263
 Schopenhauer, A., xi
 Schumann, William, 142
 scientific rationality, 211
 Scruton, Roger, 133
 sculpture, xvii, xix–xx, xxiv, 15, 26, 56, 60–
 61, 64, 77, 82, 95, 97–100, 104–5, 107,
 120, 129, 146, 185, 228, 287, 304, 314
- architectural, 79
 as center of art, 68
 Christian, 99
 Greek archaic, 73
 Greek early classical, 73, 87
 Greek high classical, 74–75
 Greek late classical, 75–76
 Hellenistic, 75–78, 85, 88
 inorganic, 79–80
 medieval, 77
 modern, 57, 81
 neoclassical, 77
 nonideal, 78, 81
 purpose, task of, 72, 78, 81
 Roman, 88
 romantic, 77–78
 as self-negating, 71
 symbolic, 79, 89
 Segal, Charles, 172
 self-alienation, 258
 self-consciousness, 5, 128, 244, 281, 303
 self-destruction, 161–63, 168
 self-disclosure, 274
 self-estrangement, 5
 self-interpretation, 5
 self-legislation, 6, 28, 259, 262
 self-negation, 71, 161
 self-recollection, 41
 self-relation, 305
 self-sufficiency, 14–16
 self-violation, 150, 160
 semblance, 94, 233
 sensation, sense, sensible, 91–94, 96–97,
 257
 sensibility, 324
 sensuous
 appearance, expression, xv
 beauty, 57
 immediacy, 217
 particularity, particulars, xxv, 218, 226
 sensuousness, 218
 serialism, 140
sermo humilis, 276, 292
 Seurat, Georges, 227, 261
 severe style, 73–75
 Shaftesbury, Earl of, 296
 Shakespeare, William, xii, xxi, 20, 162, 170
 Cymbeline, 177
 Hamlet, xii, 170
 Macbeth, 170

- Othello*, xii
Romeo and Juliet, xii
The Tempest, 177
 shape, 14, 60–61, 64, 81–82, 108
 shine, shining (*Schein*, *Scheinen*), 57, 92–94, 97, 101, 106, 109–10, 114–18, 179, 252, 264, 273
 Shorey, Paul, 122
 short story, xxii
 Shostakovich, Dmitri, 141–42
 Shusterman, Richard, 213
 sign, 221–22, 228–30, 234, 242
 signification, 124
Silenus with the Infant Bacchus, 70, 77, 83, 85
 situations, 69–70
 skepticism, 17, 298
 Skopas, 75
 Smith, David, 80
 Cubi XXVII, 80
 Socrates, 331
 sonata form, 135
 song, 115, 131
 sophists, 306
 Sophocles, xii, 155, 173–74
 Antigone, xiii, 16, 147, 150–51, 153–56, 159–61, 172, 174
 Electra, 170
 Oedipus at Colonus, 177
 Oedipus Rex, 157, 173, 177
 Philoctetes, 160–61, 174
 Women of Trachis, 174
 soul, 285–86
 sound, 84
 space, 92
 Speight, Allen, 210
 sphinx, 33, 79–80
Spinario, 70, 83
 Spinoza, Benedict de, 306
 spires, 39, 42
 spirit (*Geist*), xiii, xix, 4, 9, 17, 50, 56, 93, 96, 100, 249, 281
 absolute, xiv, 178, 271, 280
 of a people, 304
 spontaneity, 7
 stance, 66, 68
 state, 45, 146–48, 160, 190–91
 Stern, J. P., 295
 Stevens, Wallace, 197
 stoicism, 17, 259, 298
 Strabo, 46
 Strauss, David Friedrich, 28
 Stravinsky, Igor, 141–42
 structure (in music), 124–25
 subjectivity, 107, 127, 185, 258–59
 Hegel's theory of, 127
 sublime, xvii–xviii, 12, 74, 197, 254–55, 266
 Subotnik, Rose Rosengard, 125–26, 144
 substance, 306
 supplement, 51
 surface, 94, 117
 Surrealism, 198, 212
 symbol, 12, 221–22
 symbolic architecture, xxiv, 31–36, 38–39, 43–44, 46, 52, 54, 79–80, 82, 89
 symbolic art, xviii, 12–14, 25–26, 31–32, 43, 52, 74, 99, 129, 184–85, 194–95, 203
 contemporary, modern, 13, 26
 symbolic sculpture, 79, 89

 Tafuri, Manfredo, 186
 Tatlin, Vladimir, 78, 81
 Taubert, Carl Gottfried Wilhelm, 206
 Taylor, Charles, 4, 288
 technology, 225
 Teiresias, 153, 156, 158, 173, 177
 temple
 classical, Greek, 36, 39–42, 44, 46, 48–50, 53, 197
 Egyptian, 33–34, 44, 50
 text and music, 131–32, 137–39
 theatricality, 210
 theme parks, 49
 Theseus, 65
 Thoas, 164–66, 176–77
 Thorvaldsen, Bertel, 179
Tiber Apollo, 58, 69
 Tieck, Ludwig, 310, 319, 331
 Genoveva, 318
 Tinguely, Jean, 212
 Titian, xiii, 104, 110–11, 113, 265
 Tolstoy, Leo, 205–7
 tone, 97, 133
 torchlight, 63
 Tower of Babel, 33–34, 52
 Tower of Belus, 46, 52
 trace, 105–7, 109–10, 115
 tragedy, xxiv, 146, 154, 163, 168–70, 178, 189
 essence of, 149–50, 155, 161

- Greek, 16, 58, 147–50, 155, 159, 162–63, 185
 with happy, peaceful ending, 161, 164, 168
 Hegel's theory, understanding of, 155–56, 172
 modern, 162–63, 170
 tragic
 action, 149, 151, 210
 catastrophe, 155, 164
 characters, 148, 150, 155, 170
 fate, 170
 firmness of will, 155
 outcome, 155
 suffering, 148, 164
 transcendence in Hegel, 253
 Trede, J. H., 308
 trust, 166, 168, 176–77
 truth, 10, 273–74
 Tucker, William, 80

 unconscious, 157–58
 understanding, 6, 239, 281, 326
 undulation, 65–66, 85
 unhappy consciousness, 129, 284, 298
 universality, 234, 243

 vagueness, 319
Venus de' Medici, 76, 83
 See also Aphrodite
 Vernant, Jean-Pierre, 173
 Veyne, Paul, 191–93
 Virgin Mary, xx, 77
 virtual reality, 49
 Vischer, Friedrich Theodor, 204
 visionemes, 230, 241
 Vivaldi, Antonio, 131
 voice, 115
 Voltaire, 177, 304

 Wackenroder, Wilhelm Heinrich, 310
 Wagner, J. M. von, 87
 Wagner, Richard, 103, 141, 204
 Walker, John, xxv
 Walton, Kendall, 119, 123
 Warhol, Andy, 201, 239
 Brillo Boxes, 202, 219
 Washington, George, 77–78, 88
 Weber, Carl Maria von, 135
 Der Freischütz, 135
 Weber, Max, 192, 265
 wet drapery, 67
 white, 232
 marble, 62
 Wilhelmine, 315, 322, 324
 will, 234
 Williams, Rowan, 285–87, 289
 Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, xi, 56,
 58–59, 62–63, 65–67, 71, 74–76, 83,
 85, 87, 117, 186, 205
 Winfield, Richard D., 23
 wit, 331, 336
 withdrawal into self, 63
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 7, 25
 woman, 315
 world spirit, xiii, 318
 Gnostic, 328
 Wouwerman, Philips, 107
 wrestlers, 65
 Wright, Frank Lloyd, 54
 writing, 194
 Wyss, Beat, xii

 yielding, 155–56, 161–62, 166, 168–69

 Zeus, 65–66, 152
 Dresden Zeus, 58, 69, 83

Contributors

J. M. Bernstein is University Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research. His publications include *The Fate of Art; Recovering Ethical Life; Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics; Against Voluptuous Bodies: Late Modernism and the Meaning of Painting*; and an edited volume, *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*.

Rüdiger Bubner was a professor of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. He was the author of numerous books, including *Handlung, Sprache, und Vernunft; Modern German Philosophy; Essays in Hermeneutics and Critical Theory; Ästhetische Erfahrung; Welche Rationalität bekommt der Gesellschaft? Vier Kapitel aus dem Naturrecht; Polis und Staat*; and *The Innovations of Idealism*. He was president of the Internationale Hegel-Vereinigung. He died on February 9, 2007 in Heidelberg.

Martin Donougho is a professor of philosophy at the University of South Carolina, Columbia. He has published widely on the philosophy of art and on European philosophy. Forthcoming with Oxford University Press is his translation of and introduction to Hegel's 1823 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art*. His recent publications include "Stages of the Sublime in North America" in *MLN* and entries on Louis Kahn, Mies van der Rohe, and Rudolf Wittkower in the *Thommes Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century American Aesthetics*. His current projects include a genealogical study of art as discourse and as institution.

Richard Eldridge is Charles and Harriett Cox McDowell Professor of Philosophy at Swarthmore College. He is the author of *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art; The Persistence of Romanticism: Essays in Philosophy and Literature; Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Romanticism*; and *On Moral Personhood: Philosophy, Literature, Criticism, and Self-Understanding*. He is the editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature* (forthcoming); *Stanley Cavell*; and *Beyond Representation: Philosophy and Poetic Imagination*.

Stephen Houlgate is a professor of philosophy at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics; An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*; and *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*. He is also the editor of *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature* and *The Hegel Reader*. Houlgate has served as vice president and president of the Hegel Society of America and is currently editor of the *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*.

David Kolb is the Charles A. Dana Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Bates College. He is the author of *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After; Postmodern Sophistications: Philosophy, Architecture, and Tradition*; and *Socrates in the Labyrinth: Hypertext, Argument, Philosophy*. He also edited *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*. He has served as vice president and president of the Hegel Society of America.

Judith Norman is an associate professor of philosophy at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. Her recent publications include *The New Schelling*, a collection of contemporary essays on Schelling's philosophy, coedited with Alistair Welchman, as well as translations of Nietzsche: *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*. She is currently translating Schopenhauer and writing a book on Nietzsche.

Terry Pinkard is a professor of philosophy at Georgetown University. His publications include *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*; *Hegel: A Biography*; and *German Philosophy, 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism*. He is currently completing a new translation of *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* for Cambridge University Press.

Robert B. Pippin is Evelyn Stefansson Nef Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago. His publications include *Kant's Theory of Form*; *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*; *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*; and *Henry James and Modern Moral Life*. His most recent books include a collection of essays in German, *Die Verwirklichung der Freiheit*, and *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*. He is a former Humboldt fellow, the winner of the Mellon Distinguished Achievement Award in the Humanities, and was recently a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin.

John Sallis holds the Frederick J. Adelman Chair in Philosophy at Boston College. His most recent books are *Topographies*; *Platonic Legacies*; *On Translation*; *Force of Imagination*; *Chorology*; *Shades: Of Painting at the Limit*; and *Double Truth*. He was recently awarded a doctorate *honoris causa* by the University of Freiburg.

John Walker is a senior lecturer in German at Birkbeck College, University of London, and was visiting fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge for the academic year 2006 to 2007. He has published a book on Hegel's religious and historical thought, *History, Spirit, and Experience*, and has edited a collection of essays, *Thought and Faith in the Philosophy of Hegel*. He has also contributed essays to books on Hegel and Nietzsche and published several articles on Lessing, Kant, Büchner, and Böll. His essay "Two Realisms: German Literature and Philosophy, 1830–1890" is included in the volume *Philosophy and German Literature, 1700–1990*.